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PERCEPTION OF ADMINISTRATORS: CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE
TEACHERS IN HIGH-POVERTY SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE
ALIGNMENT OF THESE CHARACTERISTICS WITH THE TEACHER
EVALUATION SYSTEM

by

Toni Baggiano-Wilson, B.A., M.A.

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

February 2017

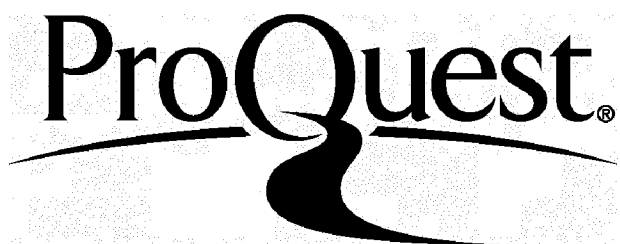
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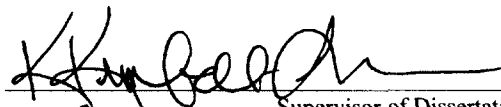
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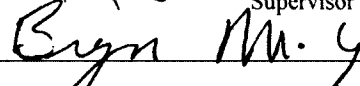
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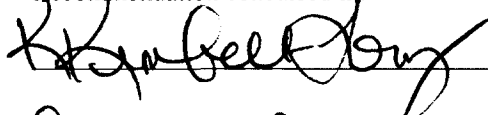
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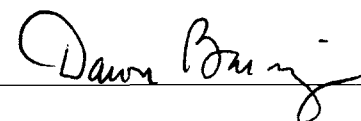


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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school as perceived by high school administrators and the alignment of these characteristics with the teacher evaluation system. School administrators identified the characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. The characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school were compared with the teacher evaluation tool, *EDUCATEAlabama*. The comparison of the characteristics of effective teachers in high-poverty school with *EDUCATEAlabama* revealed the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school did not align with the state evaluation tool, *EDUCATEAlabama*.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What characteristics do administrators perceive as necessary to be an effective teacher for students of poverty?
2. Do the characteristics that administrators perceive as important to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school align with the Alabama teacher evaluation system known as *EDUCATEAlabama*?

The researcher discovered, through interviews, that the attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty could be coded into two overall themes of *teacher responsibility* and *teacher personality*. The major themes under *teacher responsibility* were comprised of (a) addressing cultural concerns and (b) teacher roles. The minor themes included (a)

communication and (b) academic focus. The major theme under *teacher personality* was caring, and the minor themes were (a) engaging, (b) fearless, and (c) patient. Research on effective teachers undergirds all of the major themes and two of the minor themes with the following exceptions (a) research supported engagement as a major theme or component rather than a minor theme and (b) the minor themes of *communication*, *fearless*, and *patient* were not supported by literature. The attributes, mentioned above, were compared with *EDUCATEAlabama*; one hundred and nineteen of the one hundred and sixty-two subcategories of the evaluation tool, or 73.5%, did not align with the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school.

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Author Toni Baggiano-Wilson

Date 01/27/2017

DEDICATION

Hinson and Carrison

I began this process five years ago, and while I have grown academically, I have seen you grow physically, emotionally, spiritually, and academically. Hinson, you were eleven years old, and Carrison, you were six years old when I began this process. I have missed so many of your activities as I studied and wrote (on trips, on weekends, during games, etc.). I would grow weary from “mom guilt” and you would tell me how I could finish school and how proud you were of me. I am thankful for your unconditional love; you have been my biggest encouragers throughout this process. I love you always.

Ron B. Wilson, Jr.

Educational pursuits have certainly been a part of our marriage! I am extremely thankful for your partnership and support as I worked towards my doctorate. You spent hours upon hours parenting while I labored on this degree, and you are an integral reason why I am here today. You saved me with formatting this monstrosity. Thank you for loving me enough to encourage me to chase my dreams. I look forward to the future of chasing our dreams – I love you.

Dr. Faye Baggiano and Ret. Col. Tony Baggiano

I am thankful for your ever-present encouragement and example. I love you both immensely. You taught me to work hard and do my best, and this dissertation is a direct result of the work ethic you instilled in me.

Anna Calhoun

Thank you for loving my kids on the afternoons I had to drive to Ruston for classes. You made such a huge difference in our lives, and I know you are influencing the students you teach!

Dr. Catherine Estis

Thank you for encouraging me to enroll in a doctoral program. You, **Jackie Moncrief**, and **Dr. James Cozine** were my co-workers and friends. You became my family while at the University of Louisiana at Monroe.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	xv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xvi
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	2
Research Questions.....	3
Positionality Statement.....	3
Theoretical Framework.....	6
Significance of Study.....	9
Limitations.....	11
Delimitations.....	12
Definition of Terms.....	12
Outline of the Study.....	14
Summary.....	15
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	16
Poverty in the United States.....	16

Types of Poverty and Historical Context of Poverty and	
Education.....	19
Effects of Poverty on Education.....	21
High-Poverty Schools.....	23
Administrators in High-Poverty Schools.....	25
Qualities of Effective Teachers.....	27
Characteristics of Effective Teachers.....	29
Characteristics of Effective Teachers in High-Poverty Schools.....	32
Teacher Evaluation Systems.....	38
Teacher Evaluation and Principal Perceptions.....	44
Summary.....	47
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY.....	48
Research Design.....	48
Grounded Theory.....	49
Confidentiality.....	50
Ethical Considerations.....	50
Assumptions.....	51
Setting for the Study.....	51
Research Sites.....	53
Ethnography.....	54
Ethnography – historical background.....	54
Ethnography of schools.....	55

Ethnography of administrators from an overall perspective.....	58
Individual administrator ethnography.....	59
Interviewee one: Antoine.....	60
Interviewee two: Beatrice.....	60
Interviewee three: Benny.....	61
Interviewee four: Gali.....	61
Interviewee five: Jeremy.....	61
Interviewee six: Milton.....	62
Interviewee seven: McKinley.....	62
Interviewee eight: Sims.....	63
Interviewee nine: Tobias.....	63
Interviewee ten: Tammy.....	63
Interviewee eleven: Wilma.....	64
Interviewee twelve: Wyatt.....	64
Interviewee thirteen: Woodard.....	65
Access to Research.....	65
Data Collection.....	65
Data Analysis.....	66
Timeline of Data Analysis.....	67
Coding.....	67
Open coding.....	68
Axial coding.....	68

Selective coding.....	71
Theory Development.....	72
Summary.....	73
CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE DATA.....	74
Research Questions.....	74
Individual Administrator Responses to Research Question 1.....	75
Interviewee one: Antoine.....	75
Interviewee two: Beatrice.....	76
Interviewee three: Benny.....	76
Interviewee four: Gali.....	77
Interviewee five: Jeremy.....	77
Interviewee six: Milton.....	78
Interviewee seven: McKinley.....	79
Interviewee eight: Sims.....	80
Interviewee nine: Tobias.....	80
Interviewee ten: Tammy.....	81
Interviewee eleven: Wilma.....	81
Interviewee twelve: Wyatt.....	82
Interviewee thirteen: Woodard.....	83
Research Question 1: Characteristics Administrators Perceive as	
Necessary to be an Effective Teacher for Students of Poverty.....	84
Core Themes of Effective Teachers in High-Poverty.....	88
Teacher responsibilities.....	88

Addressing cultural concerns.....	89
Communication.....	91
Academically focused.....	92
Teacher roles.....	95
Teacher personality.....	97
Caring.....	97
Engaging.....	98
Fearless.....	99
Patience.....	100
Summary of Research Question 1.....	100
Individual Administrator Responses to Research Question 2.....	100
Interviewee one: Antoine.....	101
Interviewee two: Beatrice.....	102
Interviewee three: Benny.....	103
Interviewee four: Gali.....	104
Interviewee five: Jeremy.....	105
Interviewee six: Milton.....	106
Interviewee seven: McKinley.....	107
Interviewee eight: Sims.....	108
Interviewee nine: Tobias.....	109
Interviewee ten: Tammy.....	110
Interviewee eleven: Wilma.....	111
Interviewee twelve: Wyatt.....	112

Interviewee thirteen: Woodard.....	113
Research Question 2: Characteristics Administrators Perceive as Important to be an Effective Teacher in a High-Poverty School and Their Alignment with the Alabama Teacher Evaluation System, <i>EDUCATEAlabama</i>	114
<i>Barriers to EDUCATEAlabama</i>	121
Additional Theme.....	123
Summary.....	126
CHAPTER V. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	127
Discussion of Findings.....	127
Purpose of the Study.....	128
Trustworthiness.....	129
Research Questions.....	129
Research Question 1.....	130
Research Question 2.....	133
Theory.....	135
Limitations.....	137
Recommendations.....	138
Future Research.....	138
Conclusion.....	140
APPENDIX A. CONTACT INFORMATION.....	141
APPENDIX B. CONSENT FORM SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR.....	142

APPENDIX C. CONSENT FORM SUPERINTENDENT.....	144
APPENDIX D. SEMI-STUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	146
APPENDIX E. SIGNED CONSENT FORM SUPERINTENDENT.....	148
APPENDIX F. IRB APPROVAL AND FORMS.....	149
REFERENCES.....	150

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	2014 Poverty Guidelines.....	18
Table 3.1	Data from high schools in a southern town in Alabama.....	53
Table 3.2	Major and minor themes after axial coding.....	70
Table 4.1	Overarching themes after selective coding – the definition of an effective teacher.....	85
Table 4.2	Selective coding for effective teachers of high-poverty students..	87
Table 4.3	Results from the Principal Observation form – items that do not align.....	117
Table 4.4	Results from the Principal Observation form – items that do align.....	118

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1	Classification tree as a result of axial coding.....	69
Figure 3.2	Atlas.ti after axial coding.....	70
Figure 4.1	Teacher Responsibilities.....	89
Figure 4.2	Teacher Personality.....	97
Figure 5.1	Administrators' perception of the attributes that define an effective teacher in a high-poverty school.....	136

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a societal problem that affects many people with the effects being widespread. In 2012, the United States poverty rate hovered around 15 percent, and 1 in 7 people lived in poverty with an astounding 21.8 percent of children living in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2012). The prevalence of poverty among children places educators in a conundrum of how to effectively deal with the implicit responsibilities of teaching while addressing students in need.

The effects of poverty are numerous, but a primary concern is students who come to school hungry on a daily basis. Hunger inhibits the ability to concentrate and inhibits learning. Administrators and teachers cannot overlook the academic concerns that accompany students in poverty as they are more likely to suffer from developmental delays and have social and emotional baggage (Becker & Luthar, 2002). In addition, they often lack academic preparation for college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000) and lack academic rigor in the classroom (Munns, 2007).

Administrators must ensure that educational practices and teacher interaction techniques meet the needs of students mired in poverty. It is possible for low-income students with significant emotional, social, and academic concerns to succeed in the classroom (Howey, 1999; Jensen, 2009). However, these concerns must be addressed by

teachers who implement effective teaching methods and strategies aimed specifically at increasing the academic achievement of low-income students.

Statement of the Problem

Administrators in low-income schools need to have specific teacher expectations, which may vary from schools composed of students with higher economic backgrounds (Haberman, 2010). The expectations that educational leaders have of teachers often deem whether a teacher is effective or ineffective. Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia have implemented a mandated teacher evaluation system identifying teaching strategies tied to student achievement (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013). The problem is state mandated evaluations do not differentiate for schools with unique student populations, specifically when student achievement data is not tied to teacher evaluations, as in the State of Alabama (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013). This discrepancy is an issue because educational leaders are required to utilize the state-mandated teacher evaluation system. In addition, this gap could force principals to put aside what they know works with low-income students in order to align with the required teacher evaluation system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to recognize administrators' perceptions of the qualities necessary to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school and how those perceptions align with the teacher evaluation system. The qualities perceived as instrumental for teaching are typically a part of the state evaluation system, but the evaluation system does not account for the differences that exist between schools, which are comprised of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. While there is an abundance of literature of what constitutes an effective teacher, there is no catalogue of characteristics that define one, so administrators must establish their own expectations or

definition of what comprises an effective teacher (Bright, 2012; Rinaldo, Denig, Sheeran, Cramer-Benjamin, Vermette, Foote & Smith, 2009). This study assessed whether principal perceptions of teacher effectiveness align with mandated teacher evaluation systems, specifically in high-poverty schools.

Research Questions

The research questions proposed were:

1. What characteristics do administrators perceive as necessary to be an effective teacher for students of poverty?
2. Do the characteristics that administrators perceive as important to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school align with the Alabama teacher evaluation system known as *EDUCATEAlabama*?

Positionality Statement

I am the descendant of Italian immigrants on my father's side and French and Native American on my mother's side. However, if truth be told, I wholly identify as an Italian. My grandparents, the Paterniti and the Baggiano families arrived on Ellis Island in 1912 from Tortorici, Sicily. Yes, technically I am Sicilian. When my grandparents immigrated to the United States, they faced financial hardships in addition to challenges due to cultural and language barriers. My father, Tony Baggiano, grew up in Jamestown, New York as an only child with a father who immigrated to the United States believing he could create a better life for himself. My mom grew up in Orangeburg, South Carolina in a middle-class home. She experienced an idyllic childhood until her father died suddenly of a heart attack when she was fourteen years old. My parents married when my mom was eighteen, and my father was twenty-two years old. I grew up as an Air Force brat and lived in Alabama most of my life in a middle-class family.

I am a Caucasian, by definition, but throughout the years, I have been asked if I am Hispanic, Latino, biracial, etc. due to my olive skin color. I am a female who grew up believing that I could accomplish anything I set my mind to, and I should be treated equally as a female. My mother often told me, “Do not do something if you are going to do it half-assed,” so I have grown up with an extremely strong work ethic.

When I was in 2nd grade, my high school educated mother began attending college and eventually attained her Ph.D. in Public Administration while raising five children. My father was in the Air Force and has a Master’s degree in Mathematics. My mom, while getting her degrees, never ceased to love or care for us. She would write her dissertation in her office at night with all of the kids rummaging through the drawers of coworkers’ desks looking for candy. My mom taught me to love myself so that I could love others. She also modeled compassion by helping abused families, which significantly influenced my choice to become a foster mom. Both of my parents were first-generation college students (the first in their family to graduate from college). I was raised with the expectation that I would go to college; it was not a discussion because not going was not an option.

I attended an extremely dangerous junior high and high school, and there were plenty of days where safety was a concern. In fact, one of the schools that I will employ for this dissertation is where I graduated from high school. My college was the complete opposite; it was a safe place composed of primarily middle to high socioeconomic students. For the first time in my life, I was an “only child.” I was not an identical twin or one of five kids, but I was Toni Baggiano. I was able, in that safe place, to become myself, and a positive self-image developed.

During my college years, I was able to experience places outside of Alabama. I had an opportunity to live in Almaty, Kazakhstan for nine weeks. While in Kazakhstan, I lived in a business school dormitory. I performed drama for children in a cancer hospital and for young teenagers in a prison. I learned to love a culture and people so very different from my own. During my college years, I also served in Washington, D.C. for two summers, working with children who lived in dire poverty. While in D.C., I was exposed to biracial couples, minority groups, different cultures, women as ministers, and more. Experience is the best teacher, and all these experiences reinforced my belief that differences are something to celebrate.

Another significant life experience was my time as a foster mom. Right after graduating with my master's degree, my husband and I moved to Washington, D.C. where we soon became foster parents to a two-year old African American boy. I learned about parenting, caring for others, and the joy of finding an adoptive home for him nine months later. We have been foster parents to many children through the years, and these experiences have shaped my belief that children, with love and guidance, can overcome great hurt and obstacles in their life. Our foster children have influenced my behavior and attitude toward others who are hurting. I am more patient, caring, willing to listen, and more likely to give a hug. I learned that investing wholeheartedly in the life of a child would usually pay off and be worth the effort!

As an employee at the University of Louisiana at Monroe from 2006-2013, I worked as the Associate Director administering two federal grants, Educational Talent Search and Upward Bound, at twelve junior high and high schools located throughout Louisiana in Richland Parish, Madison Parish, Ouachita Parish, and in Monroe City. The

grant requirements outlined that the majority of students in these programs must be low-income with neither parent having earned a college degree. In 2011, 82.4% of program participants met these requirements and 90.5% of participants were black. The average family income was between \$9,000 and \$14,000, with 91.2% of program participants receiving free lunch. As a portion of my job duties, I worked specifically with homeless and unaccompanied teenagers under the McKinney-Vento Act.

My cultural identity and experiences with diversity and poverty have certainly affected my behavior and attitudes as an educator. I absolutely love kids, specifically students marginalized in society. My experiences with diverse student populations have made me more compassionate and understanding. I try to remember that many of the students I work with are concerned about basic needs such as food and clothing. I try to see students as kids who all need and deserve to learn academically, emotionally and socially. I try to care for students for who they are; understanding that each student has the ability to overcome struggles and allow education to provide them an opportunity to grow holistically. It is imperative that I reflect on each experience I have with others who are different than I am; that I question my own thoughts and motives, so I will continually treat students in a way that honors the individual while not allowing a student to feel ostracized.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that initially led to this study was brain-based learning (BBL) which employs an experiential component at implementation. BBL had its beginnings in the early 1990s when the seminal leaders, Caine and Caine (Akyurek & Afacan, 2013), were looking for a way for educators to provide students with a learning environment that was safe and inviting (Rehman, Malik, Hussain, Iqbal, & Rauf, 2012).

BBL was an essential component of this study as it incorporates effective teaching strategies, specifically for teachers of low-income students (Jensen, 2009). This theory assumes that when the brain fulfills its normal processes, learning will occur (Caine & Caine, 1995). Students in poverty often lack the basic, normal, processes associated with learning, such as a safe and healthy environment, nutritious foods, and adequate sleep routines, a lack of which inhibit students from learning (Jensen, 2009). Brain-based learning encompasses the individuality of the student, while learning to teach in a way that promotes the brain's natural learning processes (Duman, 2010). In other words, since BBL accounts for individual differences, teaching strategies must also be diversified. Jensen (2009) suggested that the actual composition of the brain of a low-income student differs from their wealthier counterparts. He then offered a multitude of teaching methods to enhance the composition of the brain along with improving the behavior and academic performance of students (Jensen, 2009).

BBL provides experiential learning that encompasses the natural learning process of the brain by incorporating physical activity, which is essential to creating dopamine for working memory (Jensen, 2009). BBL may be incorporated when teacher's jigsaw new learning by spreading students out to join other teams, then returning and sharing what it is they have learned (Jensen, 2009). BBL combines the mind, body, and brain (Akyurek & Afacan, 2013). For instance, physical activity may be implemented into the classroom when teachers allow students to stand up, find a partner, and engage in the think-pair-share strategy. Another teaching strategy that incorporates physical activity is having students vote on issues with their bodies (Jensen, 2009). For example, if they agree with a statement, they can touch the left wall; if they disagree, they can touch the right wall.

Students, regardless of their age, need physical activity and begin to lose interest without it, and yet many teachers continue to see students as spectators rather than participants in the learning process.

Ruby C. Payne (2005) and Eric Jensen (2009) are researchers who have played a significant role in understanding poverty within an educational framework. Payne primarily dealt with the practical application of understanding poverty as a framework for how students think, and she challenged educators to re-frame their current model of education to meet the needs of students in poverty. Jensen (2009), on the other hand, taught educators ways to implement engaging techniques, based on the theoretical framework of brain-based learning (BBL). Educators see children in poverty and know that the effects, in and out of the classroom, can be devastating, and teachers, particularly in low-income schools, play a pivotal role (Jacob, 2007). This study identified attributes of an effective teacher in poverty, identifying attributes that effectively allow teachers to address concerns in learning that stem from high-poverty.

The epistemology, or claim of knowledge, was rooted in a post-positivist critical realist view. This simply means that theory changes, and researchers continually strive towards reality (Web Center for Social Research Methods, 2006). However, reality was rooted in the reality of the interviewee. Grounded theory was the basis of the interviews and allowed the interviewees to define the social constructs (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Glesne, 2011) of what constitutes an effective teacher. The interrelated constructs included poverty, the teacher evaluation system, and administrator perceptions of teacher effectiveness. These constructs were intertwined as one aspect affected the other beliefs and patterns.

Significance of Study

Research on the perception of administrators related to effective teaching strategies is paramount for students in poverty. Administrators, in conjunction with teacher preparation programs, must not only be aware of, but must also implement research on effective teaching strategies for teachers in high-poverty schools. Many teachers are ill-prepared for the realities and stress that accompany students with a plethora of needs beyond the traditional aspects of education. Specific preparation programs are needed for teachers in high-poverty schools (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2009; Educational Testing Services, 1995). This study could lead to the implementation of pilot programs that assimilate student teachers or first-year teachers into a culture of poverty, which could prove beneficial to educational leaders, teachers, and students (Catapano & Slapac, 2010). The majority of teachers, upon graduation from teacher preparation programs, do not feel prepared or want to teach in high-poverty schools (Howey, 1999). Universities need to expose and prepare prospective teachers to teach a diverse student population and challenge stereotypical beliefs (Gilbert, 1997). Poverty simulation has been employed at a university with non-education majors, and the experience proved beneficial to students' perceptions of poverty (Vandsburger, Duncan-Daston, Akerson, & Dillon, 2010). Using the research from this study, the poverty simulation program could be adjusted for utilization in teacher education programs.

The implications of poverty must continuously be paired with practical applications for teachers (McKinney, Haberman, Stafford-Johnson, & Robinson, 2008). Administrators, in partnership with teachers, must strive to meet the needs of students who have been academically affected due to poverty. The best way for administrators to launch an improvement effort is to increase the odds of success with the factor an

administrator has the most influence over, the quality of teaching (Jensen, 2009). The teacher is often an integral component to classroom success (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2009), which is a daunting task in light of the issues surrounding poverty and the process must begin with educational leaders. This study provides readers with an opportunity to adjust their view of effective teaching for high-poverty schools and either align their view with the mandated evaluation system and/or train teachers to make adjustments in their teaching. Professional development programs could be pioneered to assist teachers in meeting the needs of students in poverty while simultaneously assuring that teachers meet the requirements of the state-mandated evaluation system. These two systems must no longer compete with one another but must learn to work together to form a cohesive and effective education system that benefits all participants.

This study may allow the State of Alabama or other states to use the results to adjust their teacher evaluation system or to provide more in-depth training for administrators on how to evaluate teachers in high-poverty schools. Professional development seminars could be conducted to ensure that administrators evaluate teachers effectively (Donaldson, 2011) or assist teachers with learning characteristics of effective teaching to meet the needs of students in high-poverty schools. Altering teacher evaluation systems could prove beneficial since the current system is a “one-size-fits-all” approach that does not highlight the uniqueness of teachers (Croft, Glazerman, Goldhaber, Loeb, Raudenbush, Staiger, & Whitehurst, 2011). Educators know that education is anything but uniform, and there are a myriad of factors, which affect teaching and student achievement.

Teachers in high-poverty schools may use this study to improve their teaching which is significant for student achievement gains (Donaldson, 2011). The literature review alone will provide teachers with insight into what constitutes effective teaching. In addition, the results of the study will allow teachers a unique glimpse into what administrators perceive to be valuable qualities needed to be successful as a teacher in a low-income school.

Limitations

A significant limitation of the study includes was that only administrators and educational leaders from high-poverty schools were interviewed. These schools were comprised of predominantly African American students in central Alabama. There were other factors to consider in drawing conclusions from similar school settings other than student population. For instance, parental and community involvement play a significant role in student achievement (Bower, 2011; Edvantia, 2005; Hara & Burke, 1998; Lechtenberger & Mullins, 2004). Another limitation was that some of the participants in this study may not have responded with their own personal beliefs about teacher effectiveness but with the beliefs they have been taught about what constitutes an effective teacher.

The nature of qualitative research is subjective. While qualitative research provides helpful information about specific case studies, it cannot be generalized (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). However, this case study may be generalized to educational leaders in high-poverty schools who align their beliefs with the administrators in the study. Time is a limitation since this dissertation is not a longitudinal study of a large population. It is evident in a dissertation where interviews are utilized, the time frame will be largely

dependent upon the persons being interviewed. In order to manage this limitation, interviews will be semi-structured (see Appendix D).

Delimitations

The ontology of this study will strive for objectivity; however, in qualitative studies the lens in which a researcher looks cannot be without bias. The researcher operated this study from an objective stance; however, the researcher recognized subjectivity comes into play when educational administrators, teachers, and the researcher are in the process of the interview. While there may be biases, the study was driven by the characteristics of effective teachers revealed through interviews of administrators and observations of teachers.

This study did not include interviews of administrators from elementary and middle schools. This was done with the belief that elementary and middle school administrators may have different perceptions of effective teachers due to the age of the student, needs of students, and the number of students taught per day.

Definition of Terms

Achievement Gap predominantly describes the academic achievement gap that exists between advantaged and disadvantaged students (Haskins, Murnane, Sawhill, & Snow, 2012).

Title I is a component of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) which provides finances to educational entities that serve a high population of low-income students (United States Department of Education, 2014). The purpose of Title I is to ensure that low-income students receive ample opportunities to raise achievement (Center on Education Policy, 2011).

The definition of *teacher effectiveness* has evolved throughout the years; formerly the focus was on the characteristics of teachers, but there has been a paradigm shift to include to what extent teachers influence student achievement (Schulte, Edick, Edwards, & Mackiel, 2004). For the purpose of this research, teacher effectiveness will refer to specific qualities or characteristics that administrators perceive as necessary to provide students with opportunities to learn (Silcock, 1993).

The term *administrator* refers to a school administrator such as a principal or assistant principal, not a curriculum coordinator or any other administrative position. The term educational leader, school leader, principal, and administrator are used interchangeably for the purpose of this research.

Child Poverty has varying meanings, but for the purpose of this research child poverty "...means not being able to concentrate due to hunger and lack of sleep or not having warm clothes when the weather turns cold. Or it can mean being teased for not having things, or being treated differently. Child poverty means coming to school worried or anxious, making it harder to learn." (White, Hill, Kemp, & MacRae, 2012, 5).

Many states have implemented teacher evaluation systems, and *EDUCATEAlabama (EA)* is the teacher evaluation system implemented by the Alabama Department of Education beginning in 2011 (*EDUCATEAlabama*, 2014). The *EA* evaluation system has a detailed rubric that school administrators use to rate each teacher as pre-service/beginning, emerging, applying, integrating, and innovating (*EDUCATEAlabama*, 2014).

Poverty is often an ambiguous term that can vary in meaning, but for the purpose of this research, poverty will align with the annual poverty levels published by the United

States Department of Human Health and Services (USHHS) which is detailed later in this paper.

Perception is how individuals organize and process thoughts, ideas, and beliefs which results in providing “meaning to their environment” (Robbins & Judge, 2013).

Outline of the Study

Chapter 1 begins by providing an introduction, the significance of the study, the purpose of the study, and the basis of the theoretical framework. In addition, this chapter addressed the definitions, initial limitations, and delimitations.

Chapter 2 examines a review of literature, which includes a comprehensive and in-depth look at research encompassing administrator perception of effective teaching strategies for students in poverty and the alignment with the teacher evaluation system. The areas of literature reviewed included (a) poverty in the United States, (b) poverty in Alabama, (c) types of poverty, (d) historical context of poverty and education, (e) effects of poverty on education, (f) high-poverty schools, (g) administrators in high-poverty schools, (h) administrators perception of qualities of effective teachers in high-poverty schools, (i) qualities of effective teachers, (j) qualities of effective teachers in high-poverty schools, (k) teacher evaluation and student success, and (l) teacher evaluation and principal perception.

The method section comprises Chapter 3 and focuses upon qualitative research. Chapter 3 provides the rationale for the research design and why grounded theory is the research model. The setting of the study will include the sites where the study was conducted, including the process to select the sample. Finally, Chapter 3 will detail data collection and analysis procedures, specifically the coding process.

Chapter 4 addresses the discussion of the findings. This chapter focuses not only on the findings of research question one and two, but explores an additional theme that emerged from the coding process.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the findings to the research questions and the theory that emerged from the study. This chapter addresses the limitations of the study, recommendations, and the possibility of future research.

Summary

Poverty is a ubiquitous problem that affects teaching and learning within schools. The research questions employed in this study seek to identify what administrators believe constitutes an effective teacher in a high-poverty school and compare those perceived qualities of an effective teacher of high-poverty students with Alabama's evaluation tool.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Perception of Administrators: Characteristics of Effective Teachers in High-Poverty Schools and the Alignment of these Characteristics with the Teacher Evaluation System was the foundation for this literature review. The literature review synthesizes previous research in the following areas: (a) poverty in the United States; (b) types of poverty; (c) the historical context of poverty and education; (d) the effects of poverty on education, teachers, and schools; (e) characteristics of high-poverty schools; (f) administrators in high-poverty schools; (g) administrator perception of qualities of effective teachers in high-poverty schools; (h) characteristics of effective teachers in general; (i) characteristics of effective teachers in high-poverty schools; (j) teacher evaluation and student success; and (l) the alignment of teacher evaluation and principal perception. It is possible for low-income students with significant emotional, social, and academic concerns to succeed in the classroom (Jensen, 2009). Administrators must address these concerns while training teachers to utilize effective teaching strategies for high-poverty students in the midst of working within the confines of the teacher evaluation system.

Poverty in the United States

In 2012, in the United States, 46.5 million people lived in poverty with 16.1 million of those in poverty being children under the age of 18 (Feeding America, 2012).

Although poverty is typically higher in the city (Olivares-Cuhat, 2011), it is not relegated to urban areas, but has seeped into all parts of the country, including rural and suburban areas (Jacob, 2007). The national poverty levels, issued by the United States Census Bureau, change yearly based on an analysis of the cost-of-living standards, unemployment rates, and a plethora of other factors that are updated annually (Bishaw, 2012). In addition, poverty is primarily measured by pre-tax income, and does not include government assistance that comes in the form of non-cash subsidies such as housing, healthcare, and food stamps (National Poverty Center, 2014). The only available government assistance in the form of cash ended in 1996, and yet over half of Americans receive some form of government benefits (National Poverty Center, 2012).

In 2014, the poverty guidelines for the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia are shown in Table 2.1; for families or households with more than eight persons, add \$4,060 for each additional person (United States Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2014).

Table 2.1. 2014 Poverty Guidelines

Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$11,670
2	\$15,730
3	\$19,790
4	\$23,850
5	\$27,910
6	\$31,970
7	\$36,030
8	\$40,090

In addition, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) releases a yearly guide, the Income Eligibility Guidelines (IEGs), which allows students to participate in the free and reduced lunch program (United States Department of Agriculture, 2013, table 032913). The IEGs align almost succinctly with the poverty guidelines released by the USHHS, so anytime the word poverty is used the assumption will be that the person(s) meets the poverty levels stated above.

Many Americans, teachers included, cannot fathom the depth of poverty that exists in America. It is hard for most people to understand that truly poor students exist in a society where government assistance abounds, especially since where neighborhood segregation only isolates the problems more (Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013). To highlight the effect of poverty, a family of four classified as living in extreme poverty in 2011 had an income of under \$11,000 (Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013). While poverty is not specific to race, the racial disparities cannot be negated. The National Policy Center (2004)

highlights the disproportionately high poverty rates for minorities with blacks at 27.4 percent, Hispanics at 26.6 percent, Asians at 12.1 percent, and whites at 9.9 percent.

Types of Poverty and Historical Context of Poverty and Education

Educators see children in poverty on a daily basis, and the causes of poverty are numerous. In understanding poverty, Jensen (2009) identifies six types of poverty: (a) situational poverty which is caused by a sudden crisis or loss and is often temporary; (b) generational poverty which occurs in families where at least two generations have been born into poverty; (c) absolute poverty involves a scarcity of basic necessities such as shelter, running water, and food; (d) relative poverty refers to the economic status of a family whose income is insufficient to meet the society's average standard of living; (e) urban poverty occurs in populations of at least 50,000 and is due to the aggregate of chronic and acute stressors due to inadequate city services; and (f) rural poverty that occurs in populations below 50,000 and is due to less access to services, support for disabilities, and a lack of quality educational opportunities. This overview of poverty allows educators to gain a glimpse into the types of poverty and discards the stereotypical definition of poverty where the parent is seen as neglectful or lazy. Administrators and teachers who work with children immersed in poverty must be willing to embrace the individuality and circumstances of each student. When an educator truly understands the reasons behind poverty, he or she can more astutely sympathize and respond appropriately.

Regardless of the types of poverty that exist, the issue of poverty in the United States is a ubiquitous problem, and the government has a longstanding relationship of providing financial incentives to assist educational endeavors, specifically with schools

that are comprised of predominantly low-income students. The Higher Education Act of 1965 was fueled by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 in response to United States. President Lyndon Johnson perpetuated *The War on Poverty*, which was sparked by *The Other America* written by Michael Harrington (1962). Title I funds came into effect in 1965 and are still an integral part of high-poverty schools receiving financial assistance. The theory of action that undergirds financial assistance to public education entities is an extension of the ideology from *The War on Poverty* and *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* by William Julius Wilson (1987). These books and studies form an explicit theory of action defined by a worldview that tends to develop among the poor; hopelessness and character became a cycle of defeat (Lewis, 1969). Financial assistance was a practical way to address the concerns once set forth by The Higher Education Act of 1965 and provided a practical means for low-income and minority students to graduate from high school and have the opportunity to enroll in college. *The Truly Disadvantaged* by William Julius Wilson (1987) placed an emphasis on training and education to change the trend of poverty in black families, specifically among black males. Financial assistance provided by the government, without a doubt, has represented a theory of action that desires to move students from a life of poverty to a life of self-sustainability through the avenue of education. Education is the single greatest avenue to ensure that students break the cycle of poverty, and the role of public school education is paramount to the academic, emotional, and social success of students (Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013).

Effects of Poverty on Education

Children in poverty battle acute and chronic stressors, cognitive lags, emotional and social challenges, and health and safety issues (Jensen, 2009). In addition, attendance rates have been significantly lower for students in poverty (White, Hill, Kemp, & MacRae, 2012) that is a result of irregular sleep routines and/or transportation issues. Drug usage and violence is higher among urban and low socioeconomic settings (Howey, 1999). Students who have learning problems are often overlooked (Murnane, 2007); thus, student achievement plummets without the necessary interventions. These challenges brought about by poverty affect the behavior and academic performance of students. Poverty has a direct impact on student behavior and is tied to a lack of social skills, increased absences, inattention, less motivation, difficulty with memorization, and the inhibition of the neurogenesis (Jensen, 2009). A staggering seventy percent of students who do not graduate from high school have experienced poverty for at least a year (Hernandez, 2012).

Hunger, a key component of poverty, affects the concentration and energy levels of students (White et al., 2012). The United States Department of Agriculture introduced the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) in 1946 under President Harry S. Truman (United States Department of Agriculture, 2014). While the government provides free or reduced costs breakfast and lunch to low-income students, there are still many students who do not receive regular meals at night or on the weekends.

Children in poverty often have a difficult time discussing and formulating ideas and remembering conceptual thoughts (Pogrow, 2009). A lack of conversation at home often contributes to difficulty in processing ideas, which inhibits the growth of social,

emotional, and academic skills of students. Conversations with adults is a key component in children developing language and critical thinking skills, and teachers, specifically in high-poverty schools, must allow time in their classrooms for students to have multiple small group interactions (Pogrow, 2009). Small group interactions provide structure and guidance to students with time to develop their social skills, conversational skills, and critical thinking skills.

One of the effects of poverty is a common term coined *The Achievement Gap*, used to describe the academic gap that often, exists between those who are living in poverty versus their wealthier counterparts (Haskins, Murnane, Sawhill, & Snow, 2012). Contrary to stereotypical beliefs, the achievement gap is based on income and not race (Ladd, 2012). Often students in poverty may not have access to extracurricular activities, vacations or trips, tutoring, and other opportunities that enrich the academic experience and promote school success (2012). A longitudinal study conducted in 19 states from 2002-2009 compared the academic achievement of Title I students with non-Title I students in grades 4, 8, and 12 (Center on Education Policy, 2011). The research was based on data provided by states and demonstrated whether Title I and non-Title I students made gains, declined, or had no change in student achievement. The study ran a state-by-state analysis with the percentage of students scoring proficient on state tests; in 4th grade the results showed that the average Title I student still lagged behind by approximately 17.2 % (2011). Research revealed that the gaps are indeed diminishing among the two groups; however there are still strides that must be made to narrow this gap (2011). Although there are high-performing, high-poverty schools, most students in poverty lag behind wealthier students (Murnane, 2007). A lack of quality teachers in

high-poverty schools only exacerbates the effect of the achievement gap (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2009). The effects of poverty, in conjunction with a lack of quality teachers, have a significant impact on schools; administrators and teachers must effectively deal with these concerns to dissipate the effects within the classroom. The ramifications of poverty do not have to dictate the success of administrators, teachers, and students. Students in poverty can rise above these issues and concerns and attain academic success (Howey, 1999).

High-Poverty Schools

High-poverty schools, plagued by a plethora of issues and concerns are less likely to meet their adequate yearly progress goals (Cunningham, 2006/2007; Murnane, 2007). Schools with a high percentage of students in poverty have a difficult time attracting and retaining high-quality teachers (Berry et al., 2009). It is no surprise that children in poverty are at a clear disadvantage; they are less likely to succeed academically (Hirsch, 2007). Research has shown that the school a student attended is not as vital as the teacher the student received (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). In addition, schools are not equal in resources and access; those in low-income schools often receive a vastly different education than students in higher income schools (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Murnane, 2007). Separate but equal is a great idea in theory, but equality not does not always equal equity.

Schools must strive to gain school-wide success through an inclusive process that involves administration, faculty, students, and community partnerships. In a study of six successful high-poverty schools, the key qualities that contributed to the success of each school were (a) assessment, (b) community involvement, (c) comprehensive curriculum,

(d) student engagement, (e) leadership, (f) parental involvement, (g) perseverance, (h) differentiated instruction that engaged students, and (i) professional development (Cunningham, 2006/2007). Community partnerships that utilize guest readers, tutors, teacher assistants, and other private and business partnerships are less likely to lack resources and extracurricular opportunities, which enhance student learning (Cunningham, 2006/2007).

Schools cannot reach their full potential until they are willing to acknowledge that teachers play a pivotal role in the success or failure of students' academic achievement. The most significant way to ensure that students in poverty raise academic achievement levels is to provide them with effective teachers (Berry et al., 2009; Donaldson, 2011; Haberman, 1995). The quality of teacher is fundamental to school success; it has been said, "good teachers make good schools" (Silcock, 1993, 1). According to research released about the success of Teach for America (Ripley, 2010), the teacher is essential to student success. It is essential that effective teachers leave the comfort of the familiar and move to low-income schools that so desperately need quality teachers. While the teacher is of utmost importance, the sole responsibility of learning however must not rest upon the teacher alone, but rather must be undergirded by the school community as a whole (Haberman, 2010).

For schools in poverty, school-wide success is dependent upon (a) support of the whole child, (b) hard data, (c) accountability, (d) relationship building, and (e) an enrichment mind-set (Murnane, 2007). The school-wide success factors begin with Maslow's hierarchy of needs which states the basic needs of a person must be met before addressing any of the other hierarchical concerns. Creating a school that exudes qualities

of caring (White, Hill, Kemp, & MacRae, 2012) by meeting individual student and community needs is essential. Free after-school programs are needed to provide support to parents and assistance to students (White et al., 2012; Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013). Schools that provide a host of wraparound services which include counseling, court services, access to dental and medical care, and other social services are imperative (Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013); these services assist students with focusing on school while meeting their everyday needs. High-poverty schools can be successful by undergoing regular and on-going summative and formal evaluations that consider the vantage points of the administration, faculty, parents, community, and students.

Schools must implement best practices in order to see improvements in student achievement and teacher effectiveness. However, it is vital to remember that best practices will be wholly dependent upon the setting of the school, the socioeconomic status of students, and the cultural background of students. In addition, an effective teacher in one setting may not be effective in another setting (Young, 2009). Best practices should not be a set of instructions that are utilized in an ideal situation, but rather best practices should be thought of as excellent teaching in spite of the environment or lack of resources (Haberman, 1995). High-poverty schools have unique characteristics and needs. Thus, it is central to the literature review that characteristics of effective teaching point specifically to what qualities and attributes comprise an effective teacher in a high-poverty school.

Administrators in High-Poverty Schools

Administrators are a key component to school success (Donaldson, 2011; Fullan, 2006) and student learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). It is

clear that school leadership is linked to teacher quality and student achievement, so their presence should not be overlooked (The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2011; Range, Duncan, Scherz, & Haines, 2012). School administrators have the second greatest influence over students (Leithwood et al., 2004); contributing 25% towards student achievement which is just behind teachers at 33% (Range, Duncan, Scherz, S. & Haines, 2012). The leadership of the school is a primary factor in teacher effectiveness. Unfortunately, high-poverty schools generally have administrators who are mediocre (Murnane, 2007) which only exacerbates school issues. Effective and high-quality leaders in high-poverty successful schools have four common beliefs and practices: (a) high expectations of students are central to decision-making; (b) they are not mere managers, but instructional leaders; (c) while acknowledging that teachers are the key component to student achievement, they also realize school leaders must promote collaboration and learning from one another; and (d) they consistently evaluate and make modifications accordingly to promote best practices (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013).

Specifically, with new teachers, principal support is often paramount to teacher retention (Darby, Mihans, Gonzalez, Lyons, Goldstein, & Anderson, 2011).

Administrators must support teachers by creating a culture and environment that maximizes learning; it is not only about the product-oriented results of student achievement scores, but it is equally about the process (Ritchie, 2013). Routman (2012) stated that without the driving force of a strong principal to guide the school, that the school or teachers as a whole could not be effective. In fact, Routman (2012) believed that teacher effectiveness relied heavily upon the principal walk-thru. The walk-thru is not a static observation but is an active process where the principal actively interacts and

engages teachers and students (Routman, 2012). In an extensive study conducted of highly effective teachers in urban schools throughout Los Angeles, the majority of the thirty-one teachers who comprised the study made it clear they respected their principal (Poplin, 2011). Teachers, by and large, understood that the principal was an authority, but the teacher chose to focus on students and their classroom rather than the principal-teacher relationship (Poplin, 2011). In other words, teachers respected their principal but felt the principal-teacher relationship did not drive classroom practices.

Two high-performing, high-poverty schools in California were studied extensively to understand how administrators provided support to teachers (Gallagher, 2012). Data that led teachers to accountability and improvement were implemented in both schools, which assisted teachers with formative and summative benchmarks (Gallagher, 2012). The administrators at both schools fostered a spirit of teamwork and collaboration, which allowed teachers to support and learn from one another (Gallagher, 2012). Administrators have an obligation to ensure that they strategically address the concerns that accompany the specific needs of students in poverty. In addition, administrators must provide teachers with professional learning opportunities to learn how to specifically implement effective teaching strategies designed for students in poverty.

Qualities of Effective Teachers

Principals affect teacher quality more than any other educator (Donaldson, 2011). With the influence principals have on teacher effectiveness, it is imperative that administrators clearly communicate their values and expectations to teachers. Administrators often have pre-conceived notions of those qualities that contribute to an

effective teacher, but teachers are often unaware of the principal's beliefs and value system, which can lead to conflict in and out of the classroom (Ellermeyer, 1992; Hoerr, 2013). Administrators must make their perceptions and beliefs known to teachers which can be done in a discussion of the following (a) children learn best when..., (b) a lesson is good when..., and (c) the most important quality in determining teacher effectiveness is...(Hoerr, 2013).

A qualitative survey of principals from ninety-three elementary schools, fifty-six middle schools, and sixty high schools in Alabama was conducted to determine principals' perceptions on how teachers could improve their effectiveness (Morrow, Gilley, Russell, & Strobe, 1985). The results revealed that high school principals felt the primary areas linked to teacher effectiveness were (a) motivating students, (b) accounting for student individuality, (c) discipline, (d) student accountability (testing, grading, etc.), and (e) classroom management (Morrow et al., 1985). According to principal perceptions, knowledge of subject matter seemed to be of little concern is likely due to the belief that principals felt teachers had mastery of the instructional material.

In a quantitative study conducted in Alabama, 100 elementary school principals, teachers, and Career Incentive Plan Coordinators (CIPCs) were asked to identify competencies that identified effective teachers (Rice, VonEschenbach, & Noland, 1988). Administrators and teachers valued 14 of the 23 competencies (Morrow et al., 1985); however, the study did highlight the different values that principals and teachers have in recognizing effective teachers. Principals valued (a) selecting appropriate teaching strategies, (b) maximizing on-task behavior of students, and (c) teacher communication of students' performance (Morrow et al., 1985). Teachers did not perceive selecting

appropriate teaching strategies and teacher communication of students' performance as equally important (Morrow et al, 1985). Administrators and teachers must agree about what defines or constitutes an effective teacher; without agreement, it will be difficult to make improvements in teaching or the teacher evaluation system.

Research conducted in two northeastern states of 30 principals found their number one requirement in a teacher was a love or concern for students (Donaldson, 2011). The disconcerting part of the study revealed that beyond this initial requirement, principals varied drastically in the qualities they expected of their teachers (Donaldson, 2011). This can certainly be problematic when the qualities expected in a teacher are not uniform, but differ from administrator to administrator. Another statewide study of high-poverty schools in Alabama was conducted to understand if principal perception about professional development differed among high-poverty, academically successful schools and high-poverty, academically unsuccessful schools (Moore, Kochan, Kraska, & Reames, 2011). Research revealed that the principal perception towards professional development at the high-poverty, high-quality schools was more wholly aligned and implemented according to the guidelines of the National Staff Development Council (Moore et al, 2011). Data confirmed that principal perception certainly affected school success.

Characteristics of Effective Teachers

Teachers are the single greatest contributor to the success and academic achievement of students (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011; Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2009; Kent, 2004; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2010; Strong, Gargani, & Hacifazlioglu, 2011), and are the foundation of the current education system

(Nandi, 2011). The definition of teacher effectiveness vacillates between student achievement scores and the results of teacher evaluations (Stronge & Hindman, 2003). It is the influence of the teacher which often determines the success or failure of students and schools (Darling-Hammond, 2012). In fact, students placed with effective teachers for three years in a row score significantly higher, up to the 96th percentile versus the 44th percentile, on standard achievement tests (Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). Low-income students who have an effective teacher for five consecutive years overcome the achievement gap and are ahead of their peers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011).

Erin Young (2009), managing editor of web and publications for *Phi Delta Kappan*, believed that an effective teacher is flexible, self-reflective, and progressive; holds high expectations of students; collaborates with students, teachers, and the community; seeks to improve herself; works well with a team; teaches the whole child; and adapts teaching techniques to reach all students. An effective teacher must never stop learning (Ehrlich & Frey, 1996) and desire to improve their instruction, which leads to student learning. Quality teachers understand that it takes a conglomeration of teaching strategies and instructional methodologies to meet the diverse needs of students (Nieto, Semadeni, Mustacchi, Hall, Grode, & Clark, 2010/2011). Change is inevitable in learning, and teachers must learn to make adjustments to meet the emotional and academic needs of students. The ability of a teacher to partake in self-reflection is a crucial technique to teacher quality (Danielson, 2011; Danielson, 2012; Nieto et al., 2010/2011). Self-reflection provides a teacher with an opportunity to reflect on lesson plans, daily interactions with students, collaborative efforts with co-workers and

community members while making personal changes that result in improved teaching and student learning.

Improved teaching includes when a teacher utilizes every moment to teach (Routman, 2012), never wasting a moment in needless transitions and explanations. Teachers may reduce transitions when they purposefully explain procedures, in detail, to students at the beginning of the year (Wong & Wong, 2009). These procedures cover how to turn in papers, small group guidelines, classroom expectations and rules, and classroom discussion procedures.

A qualitative study conducted in Estonia, asked 8th grade students what they believed made a good teacher (Laanemets, Kalamees-Ruubel, & Sepp, 2012). The majority of students perceived personality characteristics such as friendliness, understanding or caring, calm or balanced, joyful or positive, and a sense of humor defined a good teacher (Laanemets et al, 2012). Great teachers knew how to motivate students, advocate, empathize, support school leadership, embrace diversity, experiment with technology, stay abreast of current research, collaborate and network with peers, and love students (Bassett, 2013). A similar study, longitudinal in nature, was conducted of education majors from seven southern universities to understand their perception of characteristics of an effective teacher (Walker, 2008). The study revealed that students focused on qualitative measures of a teacher using the following descriptors: prepared, positive, high expectations, creative, fair, personal, included, compassionate, funny, fun, respectful, and willing to admit mistakes.

Characteristics of Effective Teachers in High-Poverty Schools

Literature often cites general qualities of effective teachers without any distinguishing factors concerning socioeconomic status of the school or students. As mentioned previously, children in poverty encounter many obstacles, and effective teacher can play a pivotal role in student achievement. With all the challenges that accompany high-poverty students, there are teachers who are ensuring that students, regardless of socioeconomic status, are meeting and exceeding academic milestones (Ripley, 2010). The demand for quality teachers in high-poverty schools has skyrocketed, as the challenges are often insurmountable (McKinney, Haberman, Stafford-Johnson, & Robinson, 2008). Meyerson, the former VP for Educational Affairs at the Heritage Foundation, referred to the low academic performance which occurs at most high-poverty schools as “educational malpractice” (Meyerson, 2001). Students attending high-poverty, minority schools, compared to higher socioeconomic schools, lack qualified teachers (Mangiante, 2011). Teachers of high-poverty students undertake many challenges that teachers in other settings may not have to deal with on a daily basis (Educational Testing Services, 1995). However, Lineburg & Gearheart (2013) believed it mattered more who you teach than what you teach because students in poverty bring with them a plethora of challenges for educators.

An effective teacher in high-poverty schools understands and teaches to the uniqueness of the individual student, valuing each student’s personality and background (Bishop, 2011). To more effectively deal with the challenges of high-poverty schools, Race to the Top (RTTT) is a federal initiative (United States Department of Education, 2010) that was developed to ensure student achievement particularly for students in need

(Mangiante, 2011). RTTT defines an effective teacher evidenced by student growth and teacher performance (United States Department of Education, 2009).

While money is provided for high-poverty schools through RTTT funds, money alone does not solve the dilemma of recruiting teachers to high-poverty schools. A survey of 345 pre-service teachers revealed that education students believe that teaching in high-poverty schools was dangerous because these schools were riddled with violence (Gilbert, 1997). This stereotypical viewpoint often inhibits new teachers from applying to work in high-poverty schools; thus, student teaching becomes an instrumental factor in preparing teachers for a variety of environments. In addition, teachers who participate in a student teaching experience that is meaningful and assists teachers in bridging theory into practice are more likely to be effective (McKinney et al., 2008). While student teaching plays a key role in teacher preparation, advanced degrees do not always contribute to teacher effectiveness. While more teachers are entering the teaching field with a master's degree (Goldhaber & Walch, 2014), this does not correlate to higher student achievement (Goldhaber & Walch, 2014; Ripley, 2010). In fact, teachers who score higher on standardized achievement tests such as the ACT or the National Teacher Exam are more likely to leave the teaching profession (Hughes, 2012).

The student-teacher relationship has an impact on students, including the motivation behind learning (Bishop, 2011). In fact, the correlation between the student-teacher relationships is the cornerstone of whether a student learns or not (Comer, 2001). It is essential for teachers to consistently engage students in the learning process (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Pogrow, 2009). One of the greatest indicators of school success is dependent upon students' interactions with the teacher (Allen, Pianta, Gregory, Mikami,

& Lun, 2011). They believe the best in their students, and are “bearers of hope” (Landsman, 2006).

Students in poverty have a myriad of concerns that plague them including, but not limited to the following: hunger; lack of emotional, academic, and social support; illness, conflict, and transience (Gherke, 2005). Teachers in high-poverty schools must address these concerns as these issues inhibit learning (Gherke, 2005). It is imperative that teachers lean on the community resources available to ensure that the whole needs of the child are met, not merely the academic needs (Lechtenberger & Mullins, 2004). While the classroom teacher is vital to the success of each child, it is important to note that Haberman (2010) suggested that the responsibility of educating the whole child must not rest solely upon the classroom teacher but must be a concerted effort put forth by the entire educational team and community.

Unfortunately, there is pedagogy of poverty that exists; it is comprised primarily of fourteen functions which include (a) giving information, (b) asking questions, (c) giving directions, (d) making assignments, (e) monitoring seatwork, (f) reviewing assignments, (g) giving tests, (h) reviewing tests, (i) assigning homework, (j) reviewing homework, (k) settling disputes, (l) punishing noncompliance, (m) marking papers, and (n) giving grades (Haberman, 2010). While many teachers in lower socioeconomic schools utilize these perfunctory tasks, these are not the qualities of an effective teacher. In fact, the pedagogy of poverty exists because of the unrealistic expectations that undergird this pedagogy. This pedagogy is based upon teachers being solely responsible for students with the belief that some students naturally handicap learning (Haberman, 2010). This belief system inhibits teacher and student growth; it is an ineffective method

of teaching that is not backed by research, and does not actively include students in learning (Haberman, 2010).

The best way to launch an improvement effort is to increase the odds of success with the factor a teacher has the most influence over--the quality of teaching (Jensen, 2009). Classroom success ultimately begins and ends with the teacher (Ladd, 2012) which is a daunting task in light of the issues surrounding poverty. An effective teacher must exude qualities of a high-performance teacher if they desire high-performing students (Jensen, 2013). Teachers must plan and incorporate a small step each week rather than doing a massive overhaul of their teaching which would be overwhelming for teachers and students. Implementing new strategies into the classroom will create incremental increases in student achievement (Farr, 2010; Jensen, 2009).

Effective teachers of students in poverty must understand that each and every child, even those in poverty, have talents and gifts to contribute (Bishop, 2011; Gherke, 2005). The sad fact is that many teachers in high-poverty schools believe that up to 90% of their students are abnormal and do not belong in a mainstream classroom (Haberman, 2010); this attitude does not exemplify a belief that all students can learn, and effective teachers of students in poverty simply cannot embrace this mantra. Jensen (2009) addressed the mind-set of change and challenged the notion that people cannot change and explicitly stated that the physical make-up of the brain can change. The belief that the brain can change is a relatively new concept for most educators who have been taught that a child has a set Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.). Not only can I.Q. change, but students can be taught thinking skills, how to make connections between concepts, and how to improve their processing skills (Jensen, 2009). Teachers must no longer cling to the

notion that a child who has a low I.Q. is out of reach, but each teacher must look to her ability to teach students in new and creative ways.

It is easy to blame inadequate teacher interaction techniques on a lack of supplies or funds, having special need students in the classroom, a lack of principal support, or some other deficit that may exist. However, effective teachers can teach all students utilizing the resources they have, all the while meeting the needs of students in poverty and assuring that learning is occurring (Routman, 2012). Teachers must be willing to constantly evaluate and modify their teaching methods (Farr, 2010) to teach to individuals within a group and actively involve all students. Effective teachers engage students actively in the learning process (Cunningham, 2006/2007) and this is exhibited in the behavior of the students and not always in the behavior of the teacher (Haberman, 2010). In other words, when students are paired with an effective teacher, then students will contribute to the learning structure and strategies in the classroom.

Student engagement, exhibited through cooperative learning, projects, and student pairing, is even more vital with students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (Jensen, 2013). Jensen (2013) identified seven factors related to student engagement, specifically for high-poverty students: (a) health and nutrition, including the emotional, social, and physical aspects; (b) exposure to a wide range of vocabulary and language; (c) effort and energy, including the motivation of a student; (d) the mind-set towards learning and hope for the future; (e) the cognitive capacity of poor students is often smaller, (f) relationships with parents and other adults; and (g) the stress level is typically higher for low-socioeconomic students. Teachers can no longer rely on traditional teaching strategies, specifically for students in poverty, but they must transform their attitude towards

teaching to develop and implement instructional methods that cause a gain in student learning (Jensen, 2013). It is time for teachers to let go of the past and embrace change in the classroom. Learning must become student-centered rather than teacher-directed (Silcock, 1993).

It is vital that teachers create a classroom environment that is “inclusive, caring, and meaningful” (White et al., 2012, 9) for students in poverty. Students need to feel as if they matter; the classroom is not a place to segregate, but it is a place that should connect students in meaningful relationships. A meaningful classroom will unite classroom learning concepts with the world of the student; this practicality helps students to make real world connections that ensure learning. One of the best ways to engage students in the learning process is to connect ideas and concepts to their world (Pogrow, 2009).

A qualitative, longitudinal study of low-performing schools was conducted using grounded theory to see what necessary teaching strategies were needed in high-poverty schools (Poplin, 2011). The study revealed that the teacher characteristics needed in a high-poverty school were (a) strict discipline, (b) traditional and intense instruction, (c) exhorting virtues and future vision, and (d) strong and respectful relationships (Poplin, 2011). As students from disadvantaged backgrounds are empowered and encouraged to do better, it will change their academic achievement along with their emotional and social health.

Teach for America (Ripley, 2010) works solely in high-poverty schools, and correlates teacher effectiveness with student achievement gains. Their longitudinal study, conducted for over a decade, revealed that there were four qualities successful teachers

embodied: (a) students and families were a part of the learning process; (b) teachers set goals for student learning and focused on these goals; (c) teachers planned, planned, and planned; and (d) teachers maintained an exemplary work ethic that did not cave to the pressures that accompany high-poverty students and schools (Ripley, 2010). In addition, Haberman (2010) completed a study that identified characteristics of exemplary teachers in high-poverty, urban schools. The characteristics of effective teachers included persisting, protecting learners and learning, approaching at-risk students, caring for students, learning to work through the bureaucracy, and a teacher's willingness to show their own fallibility to students (Haberman, 2010). Teachers in high-poverty schools must be relentless in the pursuit of teaching, and this includes remaining focused on student achievement gains while consistently making adjustments in instructional methodology and strategies.

Teacher Evaluation Systems

The process of how to evaluate teachers has been a controversial topic for fifty years (Polhemus, 1975). While evaluation, in recent years, has been tied more to student achievement, this by no means is a new or innovative area of research linked to teacher evaluation. Polhemus (1975) researched three ways of assessing teachers, which included the usage of (a) teacher characteristics, (b) student achievement, and (c) observation of teacher activities. Each of these measurement tools are ineffective in isolation of one another, but in partnership, a holistic assessment of a teacher is more viable.

The two methods used to evaluate teachers is the use of student achievement data or by utilizing the traditional method of principal observation (Torff & Sessions, 2009).

Traditional evaluation systems include principal observations, which are typically based upon a 45-minute performance by the teacher (Danielson, 2011; Danielson, 2012).

Observations have proven ineffective in systematically evaluating teachers (Strong et al., 2011). In fact, there is little link between the traditional teacher observation and student achievement gains (Strong, Gargani, & Hacifazlioglu, 2011). Due to the ineffectiveness of the traditional evaluation model, it is quickly being replaced in the majority of states.

Teachers are evaluated due to laws, accountability for financial reasons, and constituents and legislators expect, and rightly so, teachers that are of exceptional quality (Danielson, 2001; Danielson, 2012). Evaluation is typically used to determine teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2012) and improve teacher practice (Donaldson, 2011; National Council of Teachers of English, 2012). Teachers are the number one factor in the determination of student achievement gains (Bright, 2012), yet evaluations in many states are conducted without evidence or consistency (Murnane, 2007; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2010).

Charlotte Danielson (2013) developed an evaluation system, a *Framework for Teaching* in 1996 and is one of the pioneers in the design of recent teacher evaluation models. Teacher evaluations should not be designed to punish teachers, but should be a system that supports teacher quality (Danielson, 2001). The Danielson framework is based upon 22 components, which encompass the following four domains (a) planning and preparation, (b) the classroom environment, (c) instruction, and (d) professional responsibilities (Danielson, 2014). The primary purpose of a *Framework for Teaching* is to assist teachers in learning from their evaluation rather than the evaluation being a perfunctory task that is unrelated to teacher improvement and student achievement

(Danielson, 2001). Teachers, in fact, desire an evaluation system that is individualized and leads to improved practice (Wechsler, Tiffany-Morales, Campbell, Humphrey, Kim, Shields, & Wang, 2007). Evaluation should connect teachers to professional growth rather than isolate them from the learning community (Darling-Hammond, 2012). A *Framework for Teaching* forces evaluators to provide evidence for specific levels of performance, which in turn, provides controls that help eliminate biases or personal preferences (Danielson, 2011). Once the informal and formal evaluations are completed, the evaluator and teacher set up a time to discuss the evaluation and plan for specific areas of improvement through professional development (Danielson, 2011), peer observations, and coaching and mentoring opportunities (Danielson, 2012). Evaluation is about merging professional development with quality; quality requires a system that is reliable and proven while professional development requires collaboration (Danielson, 2011).

The National Association of State Board of Education (NASBE), unlike Danielson who wants a nationwide evaluation system, introduced an evaluation system that is systematic and geared more towards the needs of each state (Darling-Hammond, 2012). The NASBE bases evaluation upon the alignment of common statewide standards, performance-based assessments, local evaluations, support structures, and professional learning opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 2012). To address individualized instruction, institutions of higher education utilize student input as a component of teacher evaluation. In 2012, over a quarter of a million public school students, as part of a pilot program, were given surveys to evaluate their teachers (Ripley, 2012). Students, if asked, certainly have an opinion as to what constitutes a teacher of

high quality (Nieto et al., 2010/2011). Student achievement can be measured by standardized tests, but it cannot reveal the motivation behind why a student succeeds or fails; evaluations of teachers by students can offer a glimpse into students' perceptions of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2012). The perception of students is certainly more effective than an annual teacher observation by the principal, and can become a part of the value-added model of the teacher evaluation system.

Effective teaching is typically defined by successful student growth and achievement (Gherke, 2005; United States Department of Education, 2009). The State of Alabama, along with many other states, has implemented the use of an evaluation to define teacher effectiveness. The evaluation tool used by Alabama educators is *EDUCATEAlabama* and consists of 39 characteristics of an effective teacher (Educate Alabama, 2014). This evaluation evaluates the 39 characteristics through a process that is based on (a) professional standards, (b) self-assessment, (c) administrator observations, (d) principal data, (e) conferences between the administrator and teacher, and (f) an individualized professional learning plan (Educate Alabama, 2014; Gadsden City Schools, n.d.).

Many states have implemented accountability tools, and often the use of accountability measures such as a teacher evaluation system have more negative consequences, with more adverse effects at high-poverty schools (Bridwell, 2012). Defining teacher effectiveness by standardized teacher evaluations is often a “one-size-fits-all” approach, which is counterintuitive to the system of education, which acknowledges that students need differentiated strategies to learn. If students need differentiated strategies to learn, then how can teachers all be graded on a scale that

allows no differentiation? Basing teacher performance on student achievement is fallible as it is a reflection of a single day of student performance that can be influenced by many outside factors (Torff & Sessions, 2009). It is important to note that most teacher evaluation systems were defined to provide feedback to teachers (Louisiana Believes, 2014) and not to be the sole factor in determining whether a teacher keeps his or her job. Many teacher evaluation systems utilize an award and punishment system. For instance, the Louisiana evaluation system, COMPASS, determines pay raises and tenure while factoring in student performance (Louisiana Believes, 2014). Dependent upon the outcome of the rubric, teachers can lose their jobs, take a pay cut, or receive a stipend to increase their pay. Unlike 41 other states, the teacher evaluation system in Alabama does not base teacher performance on student achievement (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013), so the primary responsibility is on the teacher's performance or character.

There are many states implementing changes to the existing teacher evaluation system and emphasizing student achievement as a component of teacher effectiveness. Student achievement initially became an important part of teacher evaluation with the implementation of Race to the Top funds (Mangiante, 2011). Louisiana developed an evaluation system, *COMPASS*, based on Charlotte Danielson's model. However, Danielson believes that Louisiana did not utilize her model in an effective manner since only certain elements were chosen from her research-based model while other aspects were negated (C. Danielson, personal communication, May 12, 2014). The Superintendent of Education of Louisiana, John White, believes the evaluation system effectively differentiates for individual teacher differences (Deslatte, 2013).

Michelle Rhee, the once chancellor of the District of Columbia's School System, implemented a teacher evaluation system called *IMPACT* in 2009 that replaced the traditional evaluation system (Simon, 2013). *IMPACT* allowed for Rhee to fire poorly performing teachers and provide stipends to teachers that performed well (Simon, 2013). The *IMPACT* evaluation tool is used to assess 6,500 personnel within D.C. (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2014). This evaluation tool rates teachers on a combination of student achievement, instructional expertise, collaboration, and professionalism (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2014). As part of the D.C. evaluation system, teachers are provided with five feedback cycles each year, which includes feedback from the principal, instructional coaches, and master educators (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2014).

The *No Child Left Behind Act*, implemented by George W. Bush, focused on school accountability whereas Barack Obama's administration has concentrated on teacher accountability (Ripley, 2010). During the Bush administration, a shift occurred where educational effectiveness was measured purely in a quantitative manner, and qualitative research was diminished, if not cut altogether, negating educational endeavors that cannot be wholly measured (Bright, 2012; Rinaldo et al., 2009). Many evaluation systems fail to account for those factors that are not within a teacher's control such as the home life of students, achievement levels, income levels, social experiences, and other experiences, or lack thereof, that contribute to student learning (Mangiante, 2011; Wright et al., 1997). Teacher evaluation systems have begun to implement the value-added models (VAM) in many states such as Louisiana (Louisiana Believes, 2014) and Tennessee (Mangiante, 2011). The VAM offers a pre-test and post-test of student

learning in an attempt to differentiate and individualize student assessment, which affects teacher performance (2011). Value-added does provide for some individualization of teacher effectiveness (Jacob, 2007). In other words, the VAM accounts for the achievement level the student brings into the classroom, but negates the issues that often accompany a student, especially the multiple issues surrounding students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (Ladd, 2012). In light of this controversy, the VAM still puts the sole responsibility of student achievement upon the teacher. The VAM cannot account for access to educational resources, the motivation of learners, and the ability of students to learn (Mangiante, 2011).

Teacher Evaluation and Principal Perceptions

A qualitative study of twelve teachers in high-poverty schools located throughout Georgia, New York, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania revealed that teacher evaluation and leadership influenced what characterizes a good teacher (Bridwell, 2012). In other words, the evaluation and the perception of the principal will often influence the teacher. However, it is imperative that teacher evaluation is not infringed upon by principal perception (Ellermeyer, 1992), but rather from a data-driven perspective. The principal observation of teachers is subjective, and is often based upon the principal-teacher relationship (Strong et al., 2011). Evidence showed that failing teachers are rarely given poor evaluations by administrators (Ripley, 2010). The overhaul of the teacher evaluation system must no longer be based upon an antiquated checklist, but it must be based upon evidence. Evaluations are a tool to enable administrators to identify and reward phenomenal teachers while firing those who have continually failed to raise student achievement (Donaldson, 2011). Administrators must leave behind the traditional

evaluation model and utilize an evaluation system, which includes differentiation for new and more experienced teachers (Danielson, 2011). Under the more innovative system, new teachers would receive evaluations that are more frequent whereas a more experienced teacher would be evaluated every 2-4 years (Danielson, 2001).

Administrators typically lack the time for regular teacher observation (Strong et al., 2011), so it is imperative that administrators collaborate with educators within their school to assist with teacher evaluations. Teachers evaluating one another can prove beneficial (Ellermeyer, 1992). Portfolios comprised of teacher data, student data, student work samples, examples of lesson plans, self-directed teacher learning, and teacher reflections are often used in teacher evaluations (Derrington, 2011). In addition to a lack of time, school administrators often lack training on how to conduct evaluations (Danielson, 2011; Danielson, 2012; Mangiante, 2011). Evaluators need to be trained to provide evidence for the evaluation results (The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2011), learn to provide teachers with meaningful feedback, and acquire communication skills that promote conversations between administrators and teachers (Danielson, 2012; Donaldson, 2011). As part of meaningful feedback, teachers and administrators must meet and discuss evaluations. The majority of schools and teacher evaluation systems do not incorporate regular feedback which enables teachers to reflect, improve instruction, and increase student learning (Anast-May, Penick, Schroyer, & Howell, 2011; The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2011). Teachers, in the past, have been left out of the evaluation process. Historically, evaluations have been something done to the teacher rather than have the teacher be an active participant in the process (Danielson, 2001; Derrington, 2011; Ellermeyer, 1992). The traditional role of

the administrator from observer must change for the new model of evaluation; the principal is now in partnership with teachers rather than a dictator, and must include multiple measures of evidence in teacher evaluations (Derrington, 2011; Ellermeyer, 1992).

At the secondary level, many administrators lack content knowledge (Ellermeyer, 1992; Torff & Sessions, 2009), so a partnership between teachers and administrators in the evaluation process becomes even more important. Teachers are an active participant in the process, which includes self-assessment and self-reflection (Danielson, 2011). Including teachers in an on-going conversation about their evaluations requires time, a leadership style that is collaborative, focuses on effective instruction (2011), and provides evidence and not merely opinions (Danielson, 2012; Ellermeyer, 1992).

Administrators must use evaluations to provide a system of support for teachers (Danielson, 2011; Danielson, 2012; Derrington, 2011). The school leader is responsible for creating a culture of community, collaboration, and support that encourages teachers to learn from one another (The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2011). Many districts have implemented a hierarchical evaluation system; this simply means that administrators are evaluated based on the performance level of students and teachers within their school (Marzano, 2013). A hierarchical evaluation system often creates a community of interdependence and support. Utilizing the hierarchical evaluation system requires administrators to collaborate with teachers in a school-wide system that results in achievement gains for all participants. In order for achievement gains to occur in a hierarchical evaluation system, district leaders, school administrators, teachers, and students must work in collaboration and agreement towards defined goals (Marzano,

2013). School administrators are the single greatest contributor towards school success; teachers certainly influence student achievement, but principals are the driving force that links teachers, students, and community members together in a collaborative effort (Fullan, 2006).

Summary

The literature review encompassed the qualities that make a teacher effective, which include a teacher who focuses on relationships (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Landsman, 2006; Poplin, Riveria, Durish, Hoff, Kawell, Pawlak, & Veney, 2011); communicates success (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Bright, 2012; 2006; Routman, 2011); has clear expectations; has fewer classroom disruptions and varies instructional strategies (Range et al., 2012); and someone who views instruction as performance, implements personal accountability, understands student motivation, and improves instruction (Bright, 2012). The literature revealed that poverty certainly affects administrators, teachers, and students. While the effects of poverty are ubiquitous, educators can ensure that student achievement in low-income schools is attained by implementing the teaching strategies utilized by highly effective teachers. Students have unique needs and students in poverty are no exception; they need teachers who demonstrate care by differentiating learning and allowing students to participate in the learning process. Administrators, behind teachers, have the largest influence in ensuring student success (Donaldson, 2011), and it is their responsibility to align the qualities of effective teaching with the state evaluation system and promote student achievement.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Administrators are on the front lines of education as they work with teachers and students on a daily basis. This chapter includes a description of the research design, the setting for the study, the procedures, and how the data analysis occurred. The method section provides details of how the study was conducted to enable better understanding of the perceptions that administrators have about what teaching characteristics constitute an effective teacher in high-poverty schools.

Research Design

Using grounded theory as the framework, wherein the research develops as the interviews progress, this study is based on learning the perceptions of administrators. Grounded theory simply states that the theory will come out of the data and through the process of research (Glesne, 2011). Since administrators are providing their perception of what constitutes an effective teacher in high-poverty schools, the answers were not derived from previous experiences or thoughts of the researcher, but rather from practitioners who are living these daily experiences.

It is especially important in qualitative research to provide a rationale that provides logic and soundness to the research design. Lincoln and Guba (1985) provide four assumptions, which must be met for qualitative research: (a) credibility that demonstrates the subject(s) were clearly identified; (b) transferability, which shows the

finding can be transferred to other settings; (c) dependability, which exhibits the findings are relevant amidst a continually changing world; and (d) confirmability, which provides for objectivity. Credibility was demonstrated through the study by a detailed and exhaustive explanation of each school and administrator using transcription, field notes, and journaling. In qualitative research, transferability can be problematic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 1989), so the administrator interviews, file notes, audio recordings, and the teacher evaluation system provided triangulation to improve generalizability. Controls were put into place to help with the researcher's bias, assisting with confirmability. The controls consisted of checking and rechecking the data; reviewing of research and data by the dissertation committee, and separating field notes from journaling notes (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is the methodology that directed the research and provided the foundation for this study. Grounded theory requires a cyclical process for data collection and analysis, which repetitively codes, categorizes, and compares in order to reach saturation in the research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glesne, 2011; Holton, 2010). Barney (1999), one of the founders of grounded theory, states that it is “a total methodological package” (p. 836); this approach to qualitative research extends the belief that theory derives from data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The constant comparative method of grounded theory drove the discovery of the theoretical model; this method acknowledges that initial data analysis will often change direction when comparing principal interviews to the evaluation system (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2008). There are two somewhat juxtaposing schools of grounded theory; the Glaser approach is grounded in pure discovery, while the Strauss approach mixes discovery with structured questions

(Jones & Alony, 2011). A mixed approach, incorporating facets of both approaches were integrated into the process of discovery; however, the researcher leans more towards Strauss with structured questions and a basic understanding of where to begin the study.

Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality, the name of the city has been referred to as a city in Alabama. The four schools, rather than identifying them by a pseudonym, are referred to as High School 1, High School 2, High School 3, and High School 4. Pseudonyms have been implemented for the names of interviewees. It is essential, as promised in the contract signed by administrators, that the research remain confidential and participants are anonymous; thus, all names are fictitious. Each administrator was notified they would remain anonymous, and a copy of the published dissertation must be provided to each school.

Ethical Considerations

Under the guidelines set forth in the IRB by Louisiana Tech University (Appendix F), each participant willingly had the choice to participate in the study, decline participation in the study, or withdraw from the study at any point in the research process. In addition, the researcher went over the guidelines set forth in the IRB documents and provided each participant with a copy of the documents via email and in person. Signatures were obtained from each participant stating he/she fully understood the expectations of the interviews, including his/her ability to withdraw from the process or not answer any question that made him/her uncomfortable.

Two digital recording devices were used to verify accuracy of the interview transcriptions. All electronic data utilized for research were password protected, and upon completion of the study, all digital recordings were deleted. Professors and editors

who read the study did not have access to the actual names of participants; thus, participants remained confidential.

Assumptions

The assumptions of this study include an understanding that the administrators interviewed responded honestly. In addition, participants have the option to withdraw their participation from the study at any time, without any ramifications. It is assumed that those who participated in the interview process represent the sample population of administrators from low-income schools in Alabama.

Setting for the Study

The poverty rate of Alabama is the second highest in the nation at 19.9 % (United States Census Bureau, 2012). The poverty rate of children under the age of 18 in Alabama is a staggering 27% (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2014). In addition, Alabama has the second largest gap in the nation between the rich and poor (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2014). Poverty rates typically affect the education system; Alabama received a C- and ranked 34th in the nation on the *State Report Card* (Education Week, 2014). The *State Report Card* is based upon the following six criteria: (a) the chance for success which includes the foundation of learning, school years, and adult outcomes; (b) K-12 Achievement which includes status, change, and equity; (c) the teaching profession which includes accountability for quality, incentives and allocations, and building and supporting capacity; (e) school finance which includes equity and spending; standards, assessments, and school accountability; and (f) transition and alignment which includes early-childhood education, college readiness, economy, and workforce (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2014). It is important to note that while Alabama ranked 34th in nation for the *State Report Card*, the

state ranked 46th in the nation for *K-12 Student Achievement* which simply means that Alabama students are not making the necessary strides in academic achievement. It appears that poverty does indeed have an influence on academic achievement (Jensen, 2009) as the School Report Card indicates that the poverty gap for reading is 28.9% (ranked 37th) and math is 31.1% percent (ranked 46th), which is high for the nation (Education Week, 2014).

This southern city in Alabama is a culturally diverse city. There are over a 150,000 residents (United States Census Bureau, 2013). The racial make-up of the city is 56.6% black or African American, 37.3% Caucasian, 3.9% Hispanic or Latino, and 2.2% Asian (2013). Alabama has the second highest poverty level in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2012). This southern city is a reflection of the state statistics with 42,255 people living in poverty; the poverty rate has increased almost 4% in the last decade (World Media Group, 2012). Due to the poverty level in this city, a new program, the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), was implemented for the 2014-2015 school year and offers every student, regardless of income level, free breakfast and lunch (██████████ Public Schools, 2014). As a part of the *Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act*, the implementation of CEP is a federal and state provision for districts that have a high percentage of poverty (United States Department of Agriculture, 2014). School districts in Alabama may participate if the district has a 40 percent or higher poverty ratio (Sutton, 2014), and 73% of this city's students participate in the free and reduced lunch program (Crain, 2013).

Research Sites

The schools were selected by utilizing the websites of the Alabama Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics, which display the level of poverty of each school in Alabama, based on free and reduced lunch participation. The schools chosen must have had 75% of students who participated in the free or reduced lunch program. There are seven high schools in this town and four high schools participated in the study. It is important to note that the three high schools that did not meet the 75% free and reduced lunch participation are all magnet programs. The magnet programs in this city are highly competitive, based upon stringent academic requirements. Table 3.1 provides the number of students, grades served, and the participation in the free and reduced lunch program for each high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012):

Table 3.1. Data from high schools in a southern town in Alabama

Public High Schools	Number of Students	Grades	Free Lunch Participation	Reduced Lunch Participation	Percentage of Free/Reduced Lunch
A Magnet	479	8-12	103	29	27.6%
B Magnet	589	9-12	126	50	29.9%
High School 1	1,320	9-12	1,033	55	82.4%
High School 2	2,062	9-12	1,401	166	76.0%
High School 3	1,043	9-12	895	41	89.7%
High School 4	1,938	9-12	1,341	125	75.6%
STAR Magnet	456	9-12	32	19	11.2%

In addition, the State of Alabama is composed of 133 districts, and this county tied for the fifth lowest, with 64%, for cohort graduation rates while the state graduation rate reached an all-time high of 80% (Alabama Department of Education, 2012-2013). The cohort graduation rate for High School 1 is 67%, High School 2 is 60%, High School 3 is 66%, and High School 4 is 69% (Crain, 2013). According to the Alabama State

Department of Education (2013), High Schools 2, 3 and 4 have not met their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and are listed as schools in improvement.

The district represented in this study serves over 30,000 students (70% of school-aged children in the district), and 87% are minorities with the following breakdown by race: 78% are black, 13% are white, 4% are Hispanic, 3% are Asian, and 2% identify themselves with other ethnicities. There are six major private high schools in the city and numerous smaller private schools; the larger private schools house 800-1200 students, and typically have less than 5% of minority students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). The public schools are not a true representation of the city's racial make-up, which is 56% black (2012), and yet black students represent 78% of students within the school system. The racial divide in this city is not only evident as whites have fled to the eastern part of the city and into private schools, but the district is still battling lawsuits related to racism. As late as 2004, Alabamians attempted to remove the 1956 segregationist Boutwell Agreement and in 2012 to remove racist language from the State Constitution; both were defeated in votes (Harvey, 2013). In 2015, the Alabama Department of Education revised the magnet school application process based on complaints filed by the Office of Civil Rights, which stated the 60% of black students in the magnet schools was not adequate (Taylor, 2015).

Ethnography

Ethnography - historical background. For purposes of reading the interviews, it is important to note that there is indeed some animosity, as demonstrated by a few of the interviewees, towards the academic magnet high school, which we shall call by a pseudonym, STAR. STAR is a highly ranked high school in Alabama and in the United States (Klass, 2015). This school has a 100% proficiency in reading and 99% proficiency

in math (U.S. News, 2014). It has 463 students, with the ethnicity/race breakdown as (a) 195 whites, (b) 129 blacks, (c) 121 Asian/Pacific Islanders, (d) 11 Hispanics, (e) 4 two/more races, and (f) 3 American Indians/Alaskan (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). In addition, of the 463 students enrolled in the school, only thirty-six students are eligible for free lunch and eighteen students are eligible for reduced lunch (2012); eleven percent of students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

There is a massive difference in the economic and racial make-up of the magnet schools versus the traditional public schools in this particular town. The gap cannot be ignored, and many of the interviewees addressed the issue when asked about the qualities of effective teachers in high-poverty schools or when asked if *EDUCATEAlabama* could effectively measure the attributes of a teacher, specifically for a high-poverty school. STAR has been somewhat vilified by the high-poverty schools as they feel like the academic magnet school has “stolen” the best students, causing many of the lower socioeconomic students to receive a substandard education that is not equitable, as there are less academic resources and opportunities. In addition, there are notable academic and social differences among the traditional schools versus the magnet schools, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Ethnography of schools. High School 1 has 1354 students comprised of 97% black, 1.7% white, and 1.4% Hispanic with 89% of students participating in the free or reduced lunch program. This is the only high school located directly off a major interstate. Unlike the other high schools, it is located in a declining business area, whereas the other high schools are all located in a neighborhood setting. It is in close proximity to the airport, the city’s historically black college and university, a home for

students with severe special needs, a technical college, and is within two blocks of the Department of Social Services.

High School 1 was built in 1948 as a vocational school specifically for black students (██████████ Public School System, 2016). Historically, this was the only high school in this city built and designed for black students with the sole purpose of teaching agricultural and home economics (2016). It was built prior to Brown versus Board of Education, so segregation was fully implemented in the southern states, including Alabama. While High School 1 has made historical and academic advancements, including integration, it has always been comprised of predominantly black students.

The building was original and was in a state of disrepair for many years, but in 2010, the city spent over thirty-six million dollars to rebuild the school. From the viewpoint of many people who have lived in this city most of their lives, this school is seen as a “rough” school that excels in athletics, specifically football. Overall, this school is not perceived as a safe environment or academically successful. It is important to note, that there have only been six principals since its inception; all have been black males.

High School 2 has a little over 2,000 students with a racial breakdown as follows: 93.7% black, 3.2% Hispanic, 1.8% white, and .7% Asian. The school was built in the 1960s with an addition added in the 1970s. It is the largest high school in the city with over 2,300 students in grades 9-12 (in the 80s it was only grades 10-12 and still housed over 2,000 students). It is in a neighborhood setting that was predominantly middle to upper class, specifically in the late 70s and 80s. It is in close proximity to the wealthiest private school and the city’s country club. The area is currently a lower middle-to-

middle class area that has renovated businesses amidst the infiltration of a more diverse population - economically, racially, and educationally.

Historically, High School 2 has been a predominantly white school, but it became almost racially equal among blacks and whites in the late 70s up to the early 1990s, partially due to the *Majority to Minority transfer program*, which was implemented in this city in 1970 (*Young v. [REDACTED] County Board of Education*, 1996). *Majority to Minority* encourages any student who is the racial majority at his/her school to transfer to a school where he/she would be in the racial minority; this program has historically been an integral part of desegregation, specifically at High School 2.

High School 3 is located in close proximity to the highest crime area in the city, which is a residential area with a few businesses. The neighborhood surrounding the school is comprised predominantly of lower income families with a few middle to high income families sprinkled throughout the vicinity. Construction on the school began in the early 1900s, and a few years later it opened as the first coeducational school in the city (Causey, 2015). It is an impressive school, and due to its style, is referred to as “the castle.” At its inception, it was an all-white school with over 3,000 students in attendance; today three of the 972 students enrolled are white (AdvancED, 2015). Like the other high schools in the district, it serves grades 9-12.

High School 4 is situated in a neighborhood but is close to a high-traffic area with businesses, specifically close to downtown and the feeder middle school. The school was originally built in 1908, close to the current downtown location but moved in 1955 to its current location with the purpose of alleviating the overcrowding in High School 3 ([REDACTED] Public School System, 2016).

Up through the mid to late 90s, High School 4 served middle to upper-middle class white students, but with the “white flight,” its population has changed dramatically although of the four high schools it has the highest population of non-black students. There are approximately 1700 students with a racial breakdown as follows: 85% blacks, 9.7% whites, 2.8 % Hispanic, and 1.9% other (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). The school is in need of renovations, and has some severe behavioral issues. In fact, on the day I interviewed administrators, I was told I could not be in the hallway due to safety reasons. In an effort to address systemic issues at this school, fourteen teachers with Teach for America are employed (AdvancED, 2015).

Ethnography of administrators from an overall perspective. The researcher conducted interviews with high school administrators, in person, at the administrator’s school site using a digital recorder. The administrators were asked questions surrounding the characteristics they felt were needed to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school as well as questions about their view of the teacher evaluation system (Appendix D).

The population of this study consists of administrators who work in the four Title I public high schools as previously described. There were 16 administrators in the four high schools. I interviewed 14 of the 16 administrators; two of the principals did not have time in their schedule for me to interview them, and one of the administrators I interviewed has never conducted evaluations, so he was eliminated from the research, leaving thirteen administrators. The administrators interviewed varied in years of experience, but each administrator had previous experience administering teacher evaluations in a Title I school. For a better understanding of the administrators, an

ethnographic background has been provided, both for the overall group and for each individual.

The participants were comprised of nine males and four females. All interviewees were African American. The combined years of educational experience total 243 years with an average of 18.7 years in education. The combined years of administrative experience totaled 113 years with an average of 8.7 years in administration. Of the administrators interviewed, four administrators had only two to three years of experience in an administrative role. One interviewee held his doctorate, two had completed everything but their dissertation, two were enrolled in doctoral programs, and five held their Ed.S.; it was evident that the majority of the administrators not only were invested in the educational endeavors of their school but also in their personal education.

Only two of the four principals allowed me to interview them due to “time constraints.” The Superintendent and the Executive Director of the Public School System sent an email approximately three weeks prior to the timeframe for me to begin visiting schools to ensure administrators were aware of the research. In addition, I followed-up with two emails and phone calls to each school. I encountered difficulty, due to school schedules, with scheduling interviews, so I showed up to each school unannounced. This method worked extremely well, and I was able to schedule interviews with schools. In fact, when I showed up to scheduled interviews with the administrators of High School 2, the principal allowed me, impromptu, to conduct four interviews immediately.

Individual administrator ethnography. The individual ethnography of administrators will use descriptors that allow for anonymity. These descriptors will

classify years of experience using (a) 1-8 years of experience, (b) 9-16 years of experience, (c) 17-25 years of experience, and (d) 26+ years of experience. The degrees of administrators will use generalized terms such as advanced degrees rather than the specifics of their degree programs, which may identify the administrator.

Interviewee one: Antoine. Antoine has 17-25 years of experience in education. He has served as a teacher, coach, assistant principal, and principal at the junior high and high school level. He has multiple degrees including a bachelor's degree in education and several advanced degrees.

Antoine was more than willing to be interviewed and happily offered to seek out his fellow administrators to participate in the interviews – all on the spot, upon my arrival at the school to set up appointments for the interviews. He was accepting, gregarious, and talkative. The interview revealed that Antoine was caring, competitive, passionate, and that he held high expectations of his students. In fact, during the interview process he openly shared student artifacts and other memorabilia that demonstrated his depth of care and concern for students.

Interviewee two: Beatrice. Beatrice is an administrator with 26+ years of experience in education, including roles as an elementary teacher, junior high school teacher, instructional assistant, and assistant principal. She has been in school administration for over ten years. Beatrice has an undergraduate degree in education, a Master of Arts in Education, and another advanced degree.

Qualitative notes, taken during the interview, revealed she was passionate, calm, and appeared receptive to change. She used minimal hand gestures but was inviting. Beatrice continuously referenced her wide array of experience throughout the interview,

and it was apparent that her experiences have deeply influenced and shaped her current educational philosophy and practices.

Interviewee three: Benny. Benny is an assistant principal with 9-16 years of experience in elementary, middle school, and high school. He has experience as a teacher and an administrator. He taught elementary and middle school. Benny's educational background includes a bachelor's and other advanced degrees. During the interview, Benny smiled and used continuous arm gestures. He was passionate about education and articulated his thoughts well.

Interviewee four: Gali. Gali has 9-16 years of experience in education, including ten years in school administration. She has previous experience in the magnet school system. The high school academic magnet program is composed of predominantly Caucasian students with an 11% poverty rate; her experience is in direct contrast with the other administrators who have worked predominantly in low-socioeconomic settings with African American students. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Education, a master's degree, and an additional advanced degree.

She was serious, nice, extremely articulate, smart, mild-mannered and yet passionate. Her eye contact was not direct, but she did not seem evasive. The office was dark, only lit by a single lamp. Although she kept her door shut during the interview, a student knocked on the door and a phone call interrupted the interview.

Interviewee five: Jeremy. Jeremy is an assistant principal with 9-16 years of experience in education. He has been a teacher and a departmental lead, with this being his second year at his current school. He has a multitude of degrees, which include a Bachelor of Science degree and two advanced degrees.

His attitude was extremely mellow and he had good eye contact. Jeremy twisted his chair back and forth throughout the interview, appearing nervous and somewhat uncomfortable. He appeared brilliant but not always articulate. During the interview, he did not seem rushed but unsure of his responses. In fact, his interview was one of the shortest interviews conducted.

Interviewee six: Milton. Milton has experience as a teacher, coach, assistant principal, and principal. He has worked at his current school for six years. He has 17-25 years of educational experience. Milton holds a Bachelor of Arts degree, a Master of Arts degree, and an additional advanced degree.

During the interview, Milton was welcoming and kind. He seemed especially understanding and sympathetic towards my research. He spoke openly about how he had grown up with his grandmother, without parents, and with a worldview that included inappropriate language. His wife, unlike him, grew up with both parents; he discussed how he took his “lifestyle into [the marriage], and she was like, ‘Whoa, Milton, we don’t talk like that’” (P6:32).

Interviewee seven: McKinley. McKinley has 17-25 years of experience, with over five years as an administrator. He has been an elementary teacher, assistant principal, and a principal. His experience includes work at the elementary, junior high school, and high school levels. In addition, he has served in a magnet school. He has a Bachelor of Arts, a master’s degree, and was pursuing another advanced degree.

The interview was scheduled for 9:00 a.m., but I waited for forty minutes until he was ready, which is understandable considering the role of an administrator is always on call. Once the interview began, McKinley rubbed his hands together, popped his

knuckles, rubbed his head as if he were stressed, tapped his pen – he gave an impression of uncertainty, not impatience. He did occasionally smile and was pleasant.

Interviewee eight: Sims. Sims has 17-25 years of experience in high-poverty schools at the junior high and high school level, which includes positions as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal at another high school in the same school system. He holds a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Arts. This is his fourth year at his current school, and he has always served in high-poverty schools.

During the interview, Sims was somewhat unsure of multiple answers, and he had an extremely difficult time verbalizing the answers. In fact, his interview was one of the shortest in length. He was friendly but reserved.

Interviewee nine: Tobias. Tobias is an assistant principal who has experience as a high school teacher, high school administrator, and at the postsecondary level. His 17-25 years of experience put him in third for the administrator with the most experience, and he has a Bachelor of Science degree and two advanced degrees.

The qualitative field notes from the interview revealed that he was serious and articulate. He did not smile; however, this appeared to stem from his serious personality versus from being snobby or distant.

Interviewee ten: Tammy. Tammy, with 26+ years of educational experience, has been a teacher, an assistant principal, and an adjunct professor at a local university. Tammy's teaching experience included a magnet school. She has the most extensive administrative experience of all the interviewees. Tammy holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in addition to another advanced degree.

During the interview, she was extremely professional and articulate. She was passionate about education as shown by using hand gestures that demonstrated her excitement for education. Prior to the formal interview, she expressed that “poverty is no excuse; it all starts at home.”

Interviewee eleven: Wilma. Wilma has been an elementary teacher and an assistant principal. She has 17-25 years of experience in education and over fifteen years of experience as an administrator. Wilma has completed her bachelor and master’s degrees.

Of the four schools, this was the first school I visited, and it was the first administrator I had spoken with about my research. When I went to schedule the interview, I let her know that I would come anytime that was convenient for her schedule – before, during, or after school. She agreed to meet with me the next morning at 6:45 a.m. During the interview, she was carefree, open, and enjoyable. The 7:30 a.m. bell rang during our interview, so I told her we could end the interview, but she willingly *finished*.

Interviewee twelve: Wyatt. Wyatt has been a teacher, a department chair, an assistant principal, and a principal. With 9-16 years of experience in education, he also has five years of experience as a school administrator. He has a Bachelor of Arts, a Master of Arts, and another advanced degree.

The interview with Wyatt was impromptu, and quite honestly, left the greatest impression on me. I showed up for an interview scheduled with his colleague, Beatrice (i.e., Interview #2), but she was absent. Wyatt overheard me talking with the secretary, and he walked out and volunteered his time for me to interview him. As we began the

interview, the wife of a coach called extremely upset, so he spent ten to fifteen minutes tracking the coach down. He appeared sincerely worried and did not stop until the coach had been found. Wyatt was extremely articulate, wise, well-mannered, professional, and passionate. His brilliance was obvious; he was not arrogant but was confident of his leadership capabilities.

Interviewee thirteen: Woodard. Woodard has 9-16 years of experience in education with eleven years in administration. He has a Bachelor of Arts and a Masters of Arts. His experience has been as an elementary and middle school teacher, all in high-poverty schools; he currently serves as an assistant principal. Woodard was calm, yet friendly. His welcoming demeanor was a refreshing experience.

Access to Research

The researcher gained access to the school sites by personally visiting each school to explain the purpose of the study. During the visit, the researcher set up an appointment with the principal to discuss the study in more detail. A handout (see Appendix A) was provided to each principal with contact information of the researcher and doctoral school information. In addition, the consent form (see Appendix B) detailed the purpose of the research, participant expectations, confidentiality, etc. The researcher, prior to the school visits, met with the school superintendent and the Executive Director of the City Schools to gain permission (see Appendix C and Appendix E).

Data Collection

Most studies of teacher effectiveness have involved qualitative research (Haberman, 1995; Poplin, Riveria, Durish, Hoff, Kawell, Pawlak, Veney, 2011; Routman, 2012) rather than quantitative research. Teacher effectiveness is often measured by interviews and observations, so the data collection consisted of a myriad of

methods to assure that the qualitative study has a richness and depth resulting in saturation. The interviews were conducted in-person while using a recording device to allow for accuracy of transcription. The interviewees had the freedom not to answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. While the interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix D) there was flexibility for follow-up questions and discussion.

Administrator interviews lasted for approximately one hour per administrator. In addition, each interviewee was told they would receive a final copy of the dissertation, once published, unless they requested it prior to publication.

Field notes were utilized, incorporating reflective and descriptive notes from the interviews with administrators. The descriptive notes included details of what occurred in the field, including a description of events and activities, a reconstruction of dialogue, and portraits of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The researcher, through personal journaling, implemented reflective field notes after each interview. This allowed the researcher to reflect on any ethical dilemmas, the observer's frame of mind, the analyses, and more (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). Photos and notes were used to remember the details from the school.

Data Analysis

The data analyses incorporated the principal perceptions of what makes an effective teacher of a high-poverty school and aligns the characteristics to *EDUCATEAlabama*. The interviews were recorded using an application, *Voice Record*, available on the Apple iPad that allowed the researcher to listen to the interviews, transcribe the interviews, analyze the interviews, and to make a list of the qualities of teacher effectiveness from each interview. A hand-held recording device was used as a backup, which was needed for two of the interviews.

Timeline of Data Analysis

Data analysis was a continuous process during the following times: (a) December 2014 through February 2015 as I conducted fourteen administrator interviews; (b) March through May 2015 as interviews were transcribed verbatim, sorted by person and question; (c) June 2015 as the transcriptions were fed into NVivo to sort and code by question; (d) in August 2015 through September 2015 I continued to utilize constant and hierarchical manual coding along with writing the first draft of Chapters 4 and 5; (e) during June through August 2016 all interviews were completely recoded and analyzed using Atlas.ti; (f) August through September 2016, the second draft of Chapters 4-5 were written; and (g) the final draft was completed in October 2016.

Coding

Once verbatim transcription was completed, the grounded theory approach to the interviews began until saturation was reached. Initially, the interviews were integrated into NVivo, a qualitative software, to assist with separating the interviews by question; thus, thirteen responses were segregated by question and by person. In order to verify NVivo and to reach saturation, the researcher manually coded the interviews based on NVivo, utilizing an online color system in order to identify and align qualities of teacher effectiveness that are similar among administrator interviews and the teacher evaluation system, *EDUCATEAlabama*. However, after utilizing NVivo, the researcher decided based on recommendations from the methodologist that NVivo was not the most effective software for automated coding. Thus, all coding was redone in Atlas.ti, a coding software that was more user friendly and allowed for results that were more accurate. It is important to note that the coding instrument coded basic nodes (name, race, gender,

school, and years of experience) to more detailed nodes resulting from a multi-step coding process.

The coding process followed the systematic methodology based on grounded theory, which states theory develops from the data, so open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were an essential part of the process (Borgatti, 2005; Holton, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This bottom-up or inductive approach allows ideas, concepts, and themes to emerge from the data (Schulz, 2015). Throughout each step and using constant comparison, Atlas.ti was integrated which allowed for color coding, tracking of codes, merging of similar codes, and the ability to recognize codes that were not relevant to the research questions.

Open coding. The analysis began with a line-by-line analysis of the interviews, person-by-person, creating initial, broad themes that emerged based on chunks of data using words, phrases, or sentences (Schultz, 2015). As the line-by-line analysis was conducted, a participant's interview would bring up additional themes, leading the researcher to look for those overarching themes in other interviews, searching for common patterns and beliefs (constant comparison). At this point in the process, there were well over a hundred codes.

Axial coding. As the coding process continued and was consistently redone to reach saturation in the process, broad themes emerged based on the data, creating a multitude of codes. A printed list of all codes was analyzed for similar or redundant codes to reduce the lengthy list of codes down to a more manageable list of codes. During this phase of axial coding, the researcher consistently went back through the data to compare and check codes, consistently merging broad categories under more specific

themes that focused on relationships among codes. Using the *Coding Manager* in Atlas.ti enabled the researcher to check the interviews, question-by-question, to confirm that each interviewee's response had been coded accordingly; this process rectified several errors and ensured there were no missing or conflicting responses from participants. Constant comparison of the data was an essential component of analyzing the interviews; the codes created were based on themes that emerged directly from the interviews. Once axial coding was completed there were seven codes for effective teachers and eight codes for effective teachers in high-poverty schools, shown in Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2. Figure 3.1 distinguishes between the definition of an effective teacher and the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. Figure 3.2 is the result of axial coding directly from Atlas.ti, the qualitative software used for the analysis phase.

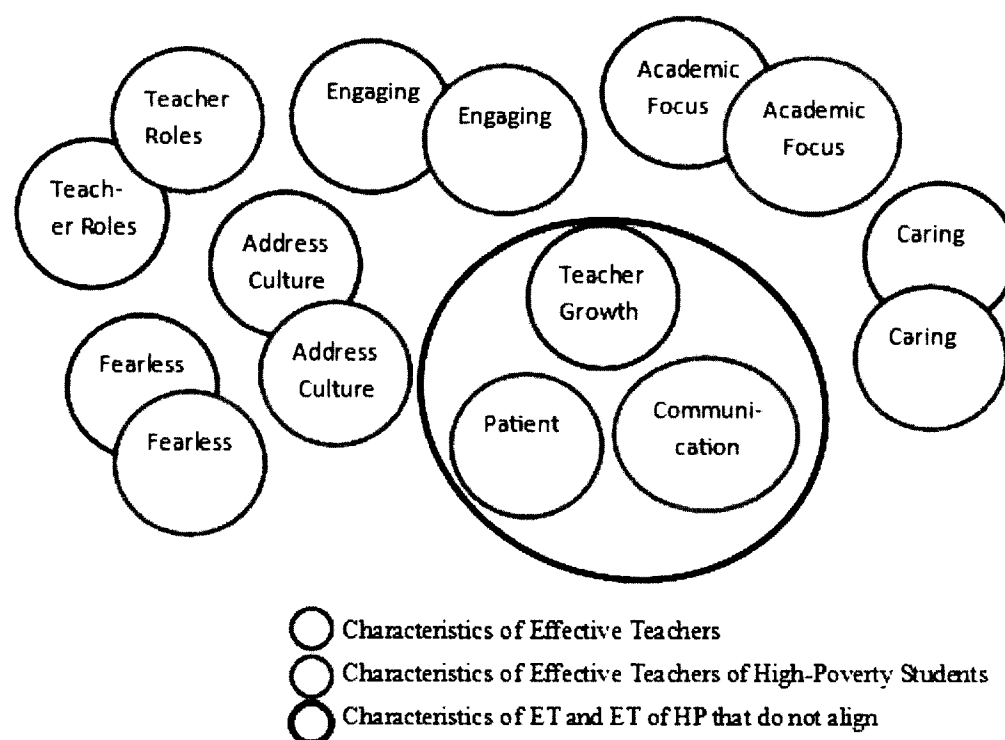


Figure 3.1. Classification tree as a result of axial coding

✱ Qualities of an ET in HP: Fearless/strong/courageous	5
✱ Qualities of an ET in HP: Teacher Roles/know the content/want to be here/discipline	9
✱ Qualities of an ET in HP: Patient	3
✱ Qualities of an ET in HP: Engaging/passionate/creative/edutainer/learning styles/versatile	10
✱ Qualities of an ET in HP: Communication: effectively/listen to students/learn from them/relates	12
✱ Qualities of an ET in HP: Caring/loving/understanding/unselfish/compassionate/empathy/relate	18
✱ Qualities of an ET in HP: Address Cultural Concerns (knows the school/what they need/gifted with at risk kids/exposure/problem solver)	31
✱ Qualities of an ET in HP: Academically Focused: grades/improvement/real life application/understand content	13
✱ ET: Teacher Roles/Objectives -show up, adequate instruction, delivery of instruction, prepared, classroom organization, subject matter...	49
✱ ET: Teacher Growth (encouragement/professional learning/collaboration/recognition/change)	27
✱ ET: Fearless	2
✱ ET: Engaging, inspiring, passionate, motivational, creative, edutainer/communicate effectively/delivery/high expectations	43
✱ ET: Caring/loving/understanding/compassionate/encouraging	18
✱ ET: Addressing Cultural Concerns/know the student	24
✱ ET: Academically Focused: improvement in students/low failure rate/results/assessment/results	17

Figure 3.2. Atlas.ti after axial coding

In addition, Table 3.2 provides a clear understanding of axial coding, including how major and minor themes were constructed. Codes are major if more than seven of the thirteen administrators agreed, and codes are considered minor if six or less administrators agreed on a specific theme.

Table 3.2. Major and minor themes after axial coding

Effective Teacher	# of Codes	How many teachers	Effective Teachers in High-Poverty Schools	# of Codes	How many teachers
Academically Focused	17	9	Academically Focused	13	6
Addressing Cultural Concerns	24	10	Addressing Cultural Concerns	31	11
Caring	18	11	Caring	18	8
Engaging	43	13	Engaging	9	5
Fearless	2	2	Fearless/Courageous	4	2
Teacher Growth	27	7	Patient	3	3
Teacher Roles	49	12	Teacher Roles	9	7
			Communication	12	5
TOTAL	180		TOTAL	99	

Selective coding. The selective coding stage narrowed down the themes for the definition of an effective teacher from seven themes to two overarching themes – teacher responsibility and teacher personality. The eight themes derived from effective teachers in high-poverty were narrowed down from eight categories to the same two overarching themes, teacher responsibility and teacher personality, although the components that composed each of the themes differed somewhat. The themes, and specific quotations used to support each theme, were scrutinized to ensure that the themes adequately represented the beliefs and perceptions of the administrators. Once the stages above were repeated multiple times to ensure saturation, family trees were created based on the themes that emerged from the interviews. During this final stage of coding, the transcripts were re-read for thematic relationships, and coding was eventually completed.

After coding each administrator's interview for the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, the major and minor themes were systematically compared to the five areas of *EDUCATEAlabama*. This portion of the analysis utilized the automated coding in Atlas.ti and was manually compared to *EDUCATEAlabama* on six occasions:

1. The first analysis was done using the *EDUCATEAlabama Collaborative Summary Report* that provides a high-level overview of each of the five categories, which uses a basic outline format with thirty-nine sub-categories.
2. The second analysis used the more detailed *Principal Observation Form*. It takes the high-level overview from the first analysis and provides multiple bullet points of explanations labeled as definitions with a total of 118 sub-categories for the first four categories of *EDUCATEAlabama*. A separate definition breakdown is

included for the fifth category with forty-four sub-categories for a total of 162 sub-categories.

3. The third analysis used the *Teacher Self-Assessment*, which mirrors the first analysis with thirty-nine sub-categories.
4. The final analysis used the *Principal Observation Form* again with 118 sub-categories and the definition breakdown for the fifth category, which has forty-four sub-categories for a total of 162 sub-categories (*EDUCATEAlabama*, 2014).
5. A period of time, typically days, occurred between each analysis to ensure that the coding was not done from rote memory. After the initial comparison and contrast of the sub-categories, a second comparison was completed to analyze the two documents with thirty-nine subcategories and merged the documents into one compilation.
6. In the same manner, the two documents with 162 categories were systematically compared and this analysis merged the documents into one document. The final documents were compared to see if the results were similar, from the perspective of a high-level overview using the *Teacher-Self Assessment* and *Collaborative Summary Report* as compared to the more detailed *Principal Observation Form*.

Theory Development

The researcher approached the research questions and interviews from the perspective of constructivism while using grounded theory as the foundation. This approach allowed the data to create “socially constructed views,” exhibited as patterns in the interviews (Jones & Alony, 2011, 97) to guide the analysis with the premise that theory construction remained in the forefront of the process. A constructivist approach to

grounded theory focuses on “what and how questions” (Chamaz, 2008, 398), which aligned with the research questions, “**What** characteristics do administrators perceive as necessary to be an effective teacher for students of poverty?” and, “**How** do these perceptions of what constitutes an effective teacher in high-poverty align with the state mandated teacher evaluation?” It is imperative that administrators and state agencies align their perceptions of what attributes define an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, especially in relationship to the evaluation tool.

The initial coding results addressed the theory of brain-based learning that is necessary for students of poverty (Jensen, 2009). The characteristics of an effective teacher for students of poverty, as perceived by administrators, included a teacher who is engaging, addresses cultural concerns, is caring, and incorporates teacher roles – all of which are integral components of brain-based learning (Caine and Caine, 1995).

Summary

Identifying the qualities of an effective teacher is not a new area of research, but aligning the characteristics of an effective teacher with an evaluation tool is a new area of research. It is essential that teacher evaluation systems align with what administrators perceive as effective teachers, specifically for teachers of high-poverty students. This research will help alleviate the concerns that administrator beliefs do not align with state evaluation systems or it will bring to the forefront of education that the current evaluation system needs to change.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE DATA

Chapter 4 presents the results and analysis of the study, which was an examination of administrators' perceptions pertaining to the characteristics of effective teachers in high-poverty schools and the alignment of these characteristics with the teacher evaluation system. The results and analysis were organized around the answers to each research question, specifically the characteristics that administrators perceive as encompassing an effective high-poverty teacher. The identified characteristics were compared with the State of Alabama's evaluation tool to see if the perception of administrators aligned with state expectations.

The data was collected using face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. Verbatim transcriptions of the interviews with each administrator were completed. Once the transcriptions were finalized, Atlas.ti, a qualitative research software, was employed to segregate and code responses from administrators.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What characteristics do administrators perceive as necessary to be an effective teacher for students of poverty?

2. Do the characteristics that administrators perceive as important to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school align with the Alabama teacher evaluation system known as *EDUCATEAlabama*?

The interview questions did not ask teachers to rank the characteristics in order of preference; instead, the characteristics or themes were considered equally important.

Individual Administrator Responses to Research Question 1

The administrators' interviews reveal their perceptions of what characteristics define an effective teacher of high-poverty students. After the individual interviews, the coding process will reveal what attributes define the characteristics of an effective teacher of high-poverty students.

Interview one: Antoine. An effective teacher was defined as punctual, someone who stands outside of the classroom between classes, writes and speaks to the class objective, teaches to multiple learning styles, has a low failure rate, knows the weakness of each student, understands the circumstances of the student's home life, is flexible, does whatever it takes for the student to learn, and has a low referral rate. When asked about the qualities attributed to an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, Antoine replied with adjectives such as fearless, courageous, unselfish, and patient. About the quality of being fearless, he stated, "That's what I call myself. Because if you think this is a job, you're crazy. Education is not a job. It is a career" (P1:43-44). The qualities he mentioned for an effective teacher were not the same as those he listed for an effective teacher in a high-poverty school.

While Antoine listed a plethora of qualities to define an effective teacher and the qualities needed to be an effective teacher in high-poverty schools, he felt that teachers

did not need unique qualities to serve in a high-poverty school. However, he followed up his answer with listing that effective, high-poverty teachers needed order/structure, passion, and someone who “says what you mean and means what you say” (P1:134). While *order* and *structure* align with his definition of an effective teacher, these qualities are not the same as the attributes he listed for an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. In other words, his responses are in direct opposition to his response that unique qualities are not needed for a teacher in a high-poverty school.

Interview two: Beatrice. Beatrice felt her definition of an effective teacher was defined by her philosophy of education, “As I said, going back to my philosophy, give the students what they need” (P2:45). She continued with her philosophy by stating, “All students can learn. All students will be able to learn if we present them with a positive learning environment” (P2:40). Additionally, she mentioned effective teachers in high-poverty schools need to communicate effectively with students and allow students to teach the teachers. She felt that teachers did not need unique qualities to work in high-poverty schools although she mentioned teachers in high-poverty schools need to be open to change. However, she alluded that teachers did need special skills to work in high-poverty schools, somewhat contradicting her stance that teachers did not need unique skills. She wanted high-poverty schools to have the same expectations for students and not lower their standards or make excuses simply because they were not a magnet school. This belief is tied directly to her philosophy of education mentioned previously.

Interview three: Benny. When asked about the definition of an effective teacher, Benny mentioned caring for the student, students showing academic results, and the student doing his or her part to advance learning. He did not feel that teachers needed

unique qualities to teach in high-poverty schools. Through analysis of his interviews, it was apparent that the qualities of an effective teacher and an effective teacher in a high-poverty school aligned; the quality was caring.

Interview four: Gali. To define an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, Gali mentioned characteristics such as compassion, understanding, willing to sacrifice and surrender leadership in his/her classroom (ownership transferred to the students), and a willingness to train the students from the beginning. She said these qualities were needed because a high-poverty school is “not your traditional” (P4:37) school and “you’re not going to get what you learned in school. I mean, you’re not going to experience that” (P4:39-40). The attributes she listed differed from the attributes she listed for an effective teacher: understands the standards of the material – content knowledge, willing to make changes, unafraid of the students, has the respect of students, is mild-mannered (no yelling), and adjusts to what works and doesn’t work in the classroom. However, she did not provide a clear answer to whether a teacher needed unique characteristics to teach in a high-poverty school, hesitating for quite a while, and then saying, “You have to give up every day a desire to reach the kids, and you can’t be afraid of them. You got to have a whole lot of love and understanding. Um, but you have to be strong. You have to be direct. Um, you cannot compromise” (P4: 41-43) Being unafraid of students and respect aligned with the characteristics she mentioned for an effective teacher, while understanding aligned with the characteristics needed for a teacher in a high-poverty school.

Interview five: Jeremy. This administrator felt the characteristics that defined an effective teacher included someone who is student-centered; ensures that teaching and

learning occurs; demonstrates a beginning, middle, end, and provides a summary; talks and engages with students. When asked if teachers in high-poverty schools must possess unique qualities compared to teachers in more wealthy schools, he said, “Absolutely. You have to be determined because the resource is not as good, even though you may receive funds” (P5:64). When asked what characteristics make an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, he responded with, “Uh, dedicated, compassionate, and, uh, dependable” (P5:34). Each of his responses did not align with one another, but it is clear, by his responses, that he believed that teachers needed unique characteristics to teach in a high-poverty student.

Interview six: Milton. Milton said the definition of an effective teacher is someone who goes beyond the norm and is caring (P6:25). He believed, “When the kids know you care. Then he’ll do things for you” (P6:64). There was some uncertainty in his response about whether teachers in high-poverty schools must possess unique characteristics; he almost seemed as if he was hesitant to share his thoughts. He finally said, “If their strengths are working with at-risk kids don’t put them [teachers] in a magnet school” (P6:32). Although he followed-up by saying high-poverty teachers should have similar background to students, should have the ability to work with at-risk kids, and should have teachers who are needed by the students. Interestingly enough, to be an effective teacher of high-poverty students, and not just exhibit characteristics of high-poverty teachers, Milton mentioned that these teachers should be caring, possess a sense of love for students, and build a relationship with them outside of school. Caring was the commonality for an effective teacher, regardless of whether a teacher worked in a high-poverty or wealthy school.

Interview seven: McKinley. McKinley defined an effective teacher as someone who improves student results, is caring, believes their students have potential, and is flexible. For flexibility, he referred to teachers being flexible in how they delivered the content and quoted a teacher he used to work with by saying, “Flexibility is a sign of intelligence” (P7:103). The attributes he listed for effective teachers in a high-poverty school included utilizing resources effectively; knowing your students; making adjustments to the student’s level, including accommodations for special needs; being a flexible person, adjusting to teach various levels of learning; communicating effectively; understanding; and someone who does not “crush” the students (P7:48) and provides hope. McKinley stated teachers needed unique qualities to be a teacher in a high-poverty school, and included the following attributes: (a) does not accept excuses; (b) communicates effectively, has discernment to filter through all of the student’s personal concerns; (c) provides encouragement, (d) believes in the ability of the students to succeed, (e) listens, and (f) is positive.

Listed both as an attribute and a unique quality in a high-poverty school were communicating effectively and providing hope. In addition, hope was mentioned in the attributes of an effective teacher, the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, and the unique qualities of a teacher in a high-poverty school. Flexibility was mentioned as an attribute for an effective teacher and an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. Based upon the qualities he listed, it was evident that McKinley believes teachers in high-poverty schools need unique attributes to serve and be effective; this was exemplified in an example he gave of his student teaching experience where he worked in a higher performing and higher socioeconomic school. At the end of his student

teaching, “It was like, ‘Okay, I got this. I really got this...and I got my first job at (referring to a high-poverty school). It all, and it was the, the make-up. That was very different (laughs). Totally different” (P7:100). In other words, he “came in with my ideas of what the student looks like” (P7:101) and tried to apply what was effective in a higher socioeconomic school to a lower socioeconomic school and it simply did not work well.

Interview eight: Sims. When asked about the definition of an effective teacher, Sims responded with, “One that knows about what is going on, is able to adjust to the situation in the classroom, inside and out the classroom...get the message through to the students...not just using the book but using...life experiences also again with the worldview” (P8:24-27). He did think teachers in high poverty schools needed unique qualities demonstrated through his statement, “Because you deal with a lot more than....unless, if you to, like, for example, STAR,” (P8:34) the academic magnet high school. He referred to the qualities of flexibility and patience when it came to an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. The qualities of an effective teacher that he listed did not align with the qualities of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school.

Interview nine: Tobias. Tobias defined an effective teacher as someone who is caring, conveys subject matter, and is passionate. He clarified caring by expanding, “And that, I don’t mean just to care on an emotional level, a social level...they have to care enough to convey the subject matter” (P9:30-31). Tobias felt teachers in high poverty schools need to provide exposure to students, “So, uh, you’d have to be able to, to show them that there’s a different world out there. That’s there’s a community outside of the one you come from” (P9:37). Effective teachers in high-poverty schools need to

accept and relate to kids while providing hope. “Caring enough to understand what, you know, what challenges they have” (P9:33); expectations, “but you don’t have to have sympathy for them” (P9:32); teach the material; and they help students understand that education “is a catalyst or vehicle, you know, out of their situation” (P9:36). The quality of caring was the commonality among an effective teacher, regardless of socioeconomic status.

Interview ten: Tammy. The interviewee expressed the definition of an effective teacher as (a) passionate, (b) compassionate, (c) knowledgeable of the subject matter, and (d) involved in a professional learning community (P10:31). Along with almost half of the interviewees, she did not believe teachers needed unique qualities to work in a high-poverty school. However, when asked to describe the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, she used descriptors that were completely different from those terms she had used to describe an effective teacher. She felt effective high-poverty teachers come from similar backgrounds, are compassionate, willing to learn how to address various learning styles, and are professional in their demeanor (P10:40-43).

Interview eleven: Wilma. When describing an effective teacher, Wilma was extremely descriptive and articulate. She said a teacher who is willing to do the work; loves children; is “comfortable in the atmosphere they are in” (P11: 98); has the ability to teach a diverse population; “fair with equity” (P11:28) referencing that a teacher had to “walk the walk, and talk the talk” (P11:30); caring; understanding; involved enough to find out where a student is; willing to make the right decision, even if it means punishing the student; reliability; and learning the students’ talk. She felt her job was to “help them be more successful, and wanna master, and wanna come to school” (P11:81). The

attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school included (a) a desire “to want to be here” (P11:39), (b) actively engages students, (c) ensures the students participate in learning by providing them with choices, (d) knows and teaches the content, (e) has the “kids explain and apply and share what they know in the classroom” (P11:45), and (f) has high expectations of the students. She expressed her views that teachers in high-poverty schools should hold their students to the same standards utilized in magnet schools. It is clear she feels there should not be unique qualities for teachers in high-poverty schools; her response corroborated this view, “I don’t (feel teachers need unique qualities in high-poverty schools). I just feel like every teacher, if you want to be an effective teacher, you’ve got to want to be here” (P11:108). Although she did not feel teachers in high-poverty schools needed unique qualities, she did mention a vast array of attributes to describe unique qualities of a teacher in a high-poverty school; these attributes largely mimicked the attributes of an effective teacher. The qualities she highlighted were for a teacher to be present each day, for teachers and learners to be actively engaged in learning, for teachers to know the content and convey it in a way that students understand, provide choices to students, and have high expectations of students.

Interview twelve: Wyatt. The definition of an effective teacher, according to Wyatt, is “someone who is able to provide students with adequate instruction on a daily basis” (P12:34). He did not believe teachers needed unique attributes to teach in high-poverty schools. However, the qualities he listed for an effective teacher in a high-poverty included (a) versatility, (b) creativity, (c) a problem solver, (d) quick on their feet, (e) effectively relate to kids, (f) passionate, (g) compassionate, (h) empathy for the

students, and (i) caring (P12:37-45). Wyatt said a teacher has to, “be an edu-tainer; able to educate and teach” (P12:51).

Interview thirteen: Woodard. Woodard believed the definition of an effective teacher focused on caring, relating to the community, mutual respect between the teacher and student, the ability to see potential in students, and teachers who employs “a wide range of strategies” (P13:26) to reach them. The qualities of a teacher in a high-poverty school were different from his definition of an effective teacher, and he said it was important to “...live in this area and you understand the students” (P13:28). Woodard mentioned if you lived on the other side of town, there would be a disconnect – but he lives on the other side of town. Other qualities mentioned in the interview were respecting students, noticing students and their capabilities, and employing a wide range of strategies to reach students. The following two qualities of an effective teacher and an effective teacher in a high-poverty school were the same: involving oneself in the community and employing a variety of strategies to reach students. He did believe teachers needed unique qualities to work in high-poverty schools; the attributes he mentioned reinforced his statements that teachers, in high-poverty areas, have unique qualities that align to their effectiveness. Additionally, the fact that high-poverty teachers need to be able to deal with students whose parents do not care about their children attending school or completing assignments was mentioned in reference to high-poverty characteristics. As with previous administrators, the interviewee mentioned the inequality of the magnet schools versus traditional schools. Woodard said, regarding teachers needing unique qualities in high-poverty schools, “Um, yeah, I’ll give you an example that is a teacher that’s maybe in a magnet school. And we

have the cream of the crop. It's not really, uh, a challenge of teaching" (P13:34-36). In other words, he believed teaching in a magnet school does not have challenges.

Research Question 1: Characteristics Administrators Perceive as Necessary to be an Effective Teacher for Students of Poverty

For research question one, administrators believed the characteristics of an effective teacher of high-poverty students were similar to the characteristics used to describe the general definition of an effective teacher although there were some minor differences. Before discussing the characteristics of effective teachers in high-poverty, it is essential to first look at how administrators define an effective teacher, without high-poverty schools as part of the consideration. Administrators cited 180 initial codes for the general definition of an effective teacher, which became six axial codes. The definition of an effective teacher may be categorized by the following descriptions, based on interviews with administrators: (a) academically focused – improvement in student grades or assessments, low failure rate, or other metrics related to improved student results; (b) addressing cultural concerns – knowing the student and understanding his/her background and way of living; (c) caring – expressed through the embodiment of terms such as caring, loving, understanding, compassionate, and encouragement; (d) engaging – inspiring, passionate, motivational, creative, edu-tainer, and communicates effectively; (e) fearless – not afraid; (f) teacher growth – professional learning, collaborative learning among teachers, teacher recognition or encouragement by the administrators that leads to better teaching, willingness to change; and (g) teacher roles – encompasses many roles that are a part of the teacher's job and included: state and write the lesson objective, show up, provide adequate instruction, delivery of instruction, teacher preparation, subject

matter expert, organization, a willingness to change, and disciplining students. These major themes were identified by at least seven of the thirteen administrators while minor themes were addressed by less than half of the administrators.

During selective coding, each of the aforementioned themes aligned into two overarching themes demonstrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Overarching themes after selective coding - the definition of an effective teacher

Category – Definition of an Effective Teacher	Definition	Data Units	Data Density
Teacher Responsibilities	The responsibilities the teacher must address; day-to-day procedures and issues.	Teacher Growth	27
		Teacher Roles	49
		Academically Focused	17
		Addressing Cultural Concerns	24
			Total Codes 117
Teacher Personality	The attributes or characteristics linked directly to a teacher's personality.	Caring	18
		Engaging	43
		Fearless	2
			Total Codes 63

The data above focused on the general characteristics of an effective teacher, without poverty being considered, but the interviewees were also asked to identify the qualities of an effective teacher for high-poverty schools, which is the focus of research question one. Axial coding, through constant comparison of data, revealed there were 99 attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school that coded into three major themes and five minor themes. Thus, the definition for effective teachers in high-poverty

schools were derived directly from the transcripts of administrators: (a) academically focused – test scores may not indicate an improvement, but students have improved from when they arrived in the class; addressing academic challenges; no child left behind; student potential; expectations; and hope for success, (b) addressing cultural concerns – knowing the student and understanding his/her background and way of living; expose students to experiences; educate parents; nurture the whole student; and understand the ramifications of poverty, (c) caring – expressed through the embodiment of terms such as caring, loving, understanding, compassionate, and empathy, (d) communication – communicate well with students; listen to students; and relate to kids through your words and actions, (e) engaging – passionate, creative, edu-tainer, addressing different learning styles, and versatility; (f) fearless – not afraid and courageous, (g) patient – do not get frustrated with the student and provide understanding, and (h) teacher roles – know the content; want to be at school; and provide discipline to students.

Selective coding, for effective teachers in high-poverty schools, allowed for the aforementioned major and minor codes, like the definition of an effective teacher, to feed under two themes as demonstrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Selective coding for effective teachers of high-poverty students

Category – Effective Teacher in a High-Poverty School	Definition	Data Units	Data Density
Teacher Responsibilities	The responsibilities the teacher must address; day-to-day procedures and issues.	Communication	12
		Teacher Roles	9
		Academically Focused	13
		Addressing Cultural Concerns	31
		Total	Codes 65
Teacher Personality	The attributes or characteristics linked directly to a teacher's personality.	Caring	18
		Engaging	9
		Fearless	4
		Patient	3
		Total	Codes 34

Of the thirteen administrators interviewed, seven felt teachers needed unique qualities for high-poverty schools. Although only seven of the thirteen teachers expressed their belief that teachers needed unique qualities to serve in a high-poverty school, all thirteen administrators, at some point in their interview, listed characteristics they believed were needed for teachers in high-poverty schools.

Interviews revealed the attributes most commonly associated with high-poverty schools were similar to the general attributes of an effective teacher although there were more major themes that emerged from the definition of an effective teacher. Six of the eight overarching attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school aligned with the attributes of an effective teacher, although there were predominantly higher responses

concerning the attributes of an effective teacher versus the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. The areas that overlapped for the characteristics of an effective teacher and the characteristics of an effective teacher in high-poverty were (a) academically focused, (b) addressing cultural concerns, (c) caring, (d) engaging, (e) fearlessness, and (f) teacher roles. The themes that were unique to the attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty were (a) communication, and (b) patience. The only attribute of an effective teacher not mentioned in an attribute of an effective teacher in high-poverty was teacher growth; effective teachers in high-poverty schools focused on student potential and failed to mention the importance of teacher growth. In addition, the value placed on teacher roles occurred at a significantly lower rate (7 codes to 49 codes) for effective teachers in high-poverty schools. The lower rate of occurrence for teacher roles and the absence of teacher growth could be a factor in teacher effectiveness and student growth. In spite of these differences, the interviewees revealed that the majority of administrators perceived the attributes of an effective teacher to be somewhat similar, regardless of the socioeconomic status of the school.

Core Themes of Effective Teachers in High-Poverty

After the analysis of the administrator interviews, two core themes emerged as pivotal in the role of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school: teacher responsibilities and teacher personality, defined previously. However, it is imperative to note that the words of the administrators strongly supported these perceptions, and the following information will focus on the interviews to support the themes.

Teacher responsibilities. The areas under the theme of teacher responsibilities include communication, teacher roles, addressing cultural concerns, and being

academically focused. Administrators believe these responsibilities are paramount to being an effective teacher. The areas of teacher responsibilities are shown in Figure 4.1.

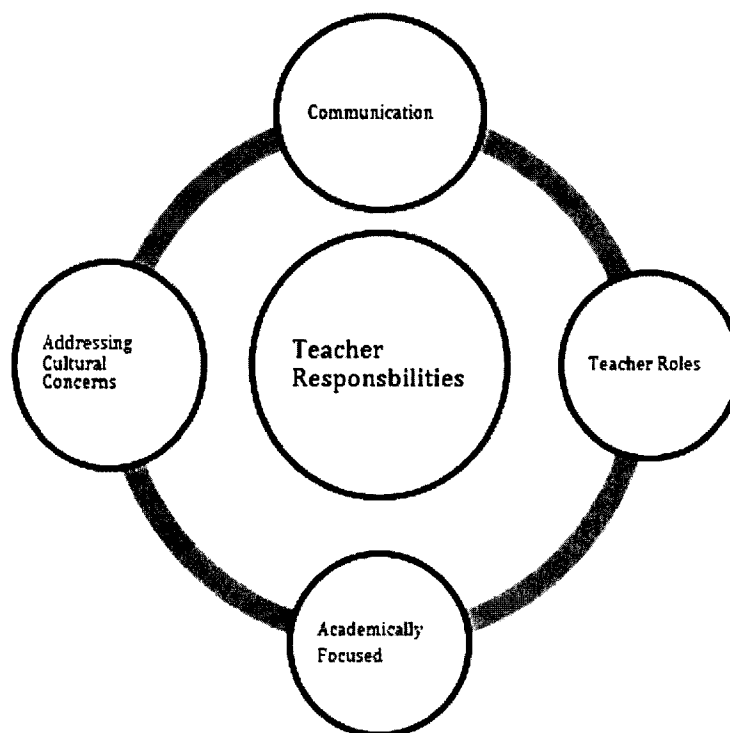


Figure 4.1. Teacher Responsibilities

Addressing cultural concerns. The greatest indicator, according to the interviews with administrators, of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, is the ability to address cultural concerns. Eleven of the thirteen administrators stressed the uniqueness of working in a high-poverty school and the plethora of cultural concerns that must be addressed to be an effective teacher. Research on poverty and its effects on learning confirmed this perception of administrators; understanding poverty and its effects on learning enabled teachers to address cultural concerns in a meaningful way (Haberman, 1995; Payne, 1996; Jensen, 2009). Addressing cultural concerns was conveyed in many different aspects, including the parents, students, and the culture of poverty. At the root of

the issue is the students' home life, as expressed by Beatrice, "But they can come to school with these new tennis shoes and with the new hair and all of that stuff. Before we can move forward in education, we need to do something with these parents. We need to educate parents first. If I had a problem when I taught and I called the parent in, the parent acted the same way" (P2:101). Education, in high-poverty schools, goes "beyond the order of just teaching...you have to build another relationship with them besides here at school" (P6:30). The role of the teacher is multi-faceted as expressed by Jeremy, "But what I mean by nurture the whole student is we have to be the mother, the father, the sister, and the brother in a high-poverty area" (P5:34). Teachers must wholly invest in students, which often goes beyond the normal school hours and typical duties.

The administrators understood that the home life of their students is not always stable and students are "raising themselves" (P7:53.). The home life of students often infiltrates the entire school community and results in a school culture that mimics the culture of the family and the surrounding community. "If you had time I can tell you some of the stories that I just recently found out about some of our kids. And I think that plays a role in as much that kid brings it to school. And so our teachers...have to discern through all of that to find the kid and say, 'You got problems that are going on out there, but I assure you, I promise you, if you get this...you're going to be successful' (P7:53). Students may battle an unstable home life, but often they are battling a community culture that involves, "shootings...fights. All of that will come back to the school in some form or fashion" (P8:34).

This community culture is often one that discourages these students from academically succeeding. In fact, students from poverty often see "mediocrity all the

time. Not necessarily in the home but in their surroundings and a lot of times” (P9:37). As one administrator expressed, “high poverty areas have a lack of value on education and come from a background where parents are not educated. So they grow up in a home where they don’t see successful individuals” (P12:54). Administrators see education as “a catalyst or vehicle, you know, out of their situation” (P9:33) and part of education is to expose students or “to show them that there’s a different world out there. That there’s a community outside of the one that you come from” (P9:37). Unfortunately, “kids in high poverty areas don’t travel a lot. They don’t go to a lot of educational venues, so they lack exposure” (P12:56). The school must address the academic, social and emotional facets of students’ lives while providing opportunities to experience the world outside of the one they know.

Due to the high stress that may accompany high-poverty schools, exacerbated by cultural differences and financial inequalities, not every teacher is equipped to succeed in this unique environment (McKinney et al., 2008). Administrators acknowledged the unique challenges of working in a high-poverty school may require a unique teacher “because we have to look at the background of a particular teacher because not everybody can or wants to work with students within high poverty areas, because it’s a challenge within itself” (P10:40). Teachers “have to understand what they are going through” (P12:41) because “especially in the high poverty areas, kids go through so many different things” (P12:44). Milton felt, “if their [a teacher’s] strengths are working with at risk kids, don’t put them in a magnet school” (P6:32).

Communication. Communication is a two-way process that involves both student and teacher, including verbal communication; listening; and nonverbal communication

such as eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, and tone. Administrators identified listening and the manner in which we communicate as components of effective communication. Beatrice stated that a teacher must, “communicate effectively with the students. That’s number one. And everyone – or all teachers are not able or equipped to do that” (P2: 2:46). She felt an important part of communicating effectively was to “learn and listen to the students” (P2:47). McKinley also felt to communicate effectively “you’ve got to be able to listen” (P7:54). Listening and learning from students is perhaps tied to addressing cultural issues in high-poverty schools; it is from this aspect of communication that a teacher can begin to understand his/her students to more fully address classroom needs.

Gali felt an essential part of communicating effectively involved being, “direct” (P4:43) and, “when I say something I mean it. I don’t have to yell it” (P4:44). To communicate effectively, McKinley felt like Gali, that the manner in which a teacher approaches students is pivotal, “you’ve got to find a way to communicate to them effectively and not crush their feelings – hurt their feelings” (P7:48). In spite of the challenges often embedded into a high-poverty school, Gali particularly felt that an important part of communication was not the message itself, but how the message was communicated to students.

Academically focused. Administrators acknowledged that academics were a focus; however, it was couched in the knowledge, as stated previously, that cultural concerns may influence a student academically. In fact, McKinley expressed,

“And so a lot of our kids – and even our test scores say it – a lot of our kids are not on the level they really need to be effective. So, now, the

teacher has the undaunting task of trying to find out where the student is and to try to get them to a level they can comprehend, and show some, um, improvement” (P7:46).

Tammy felt the teacher needs to “assist students on the road to make some type of progress” (P10:42). Being academically focused on students means identifying and assisting students who “have been left behind...maybe slipped through the cracks” (P9:65). A teacher, in any setting, must be able to identify the individual needs amidst the mass of students. But for a teacher in a high-poverty school it is essential to the success of the student (Bishop, 2011; Manganite, 2011).

An essential component of the student academically succeeding requires the teacher to “understand the challenges they have and looking past that –getting past that” (P9:34) and “to bring the kid with you, so it’s never ending” (P7:55). In high-poverty schools, as previously noted, it is essential to tie learning to real-life application to assist students with succeeding. Wilma noted, “give them some real-life happenings; go out to the [REDACTED] plant and say, ‘Hey, can three or four of our kids come out there to work over the summer to get the real feel of it, to magnify...what’s in the real world” (P11:43).

Another aspect of the teacher being academically focused is recognizing their potential to achieve academically. Providing students with hope (Landsman, 2006) and believing in their ability to succeed has been recognized as an important quality for a teacher to possess in a high-poverty school. To get students, “to understand that this [education] is a catalyst of vehicle out of their situation” (P9:36) and to instill hope of a better life is integral in any setting but especially important in a high-poverty setting. A teacher has “to be positive and pushing forward...to bring the kid with you” (P7:55).

“Students from, uh, higher economic backgrounds, tend to get a push from home. The expectation is already there, it’s almost innate” (P9:37) but a teacher in a high-poverty school would have to show them there is “a whole lot of opportunities...without being condescending...and convey that in a way the kids have hope” (P9:37).

High expectations were another component of a teacher being academically focused. While many administrators felt animosity towards magnet schools and felt high-poverty schools should not be held to the same standards, Wilma felt quite differently. She felt that teachers should hold high standards and expectations and emphatically stated, “Why can’t we teach them like it’s a magnet school? Just because we’re not a magnet school, why can’t you have high expectations of yourself and the students” (P11:44). She also felt that the teacher and student’s expectations must align, “If I have to do my work and study and research this, why can’t you do your work, research and study this? Share what they know” (P11:45). As Woodard noted it is as simple as “noticing the students and their capabilities” (P13:30).

Effective teachers in high-poverty schools felt that academic improvement was somewhat important although at a little less than half the importance when compared to their definition of an effective teacher. This is somewhat surprising considering the district ACT Plan score for 10th graders was 39.82% in reading and 17.53% for math (Alabama State Department of Education, 2016). In addition, High School 2 has been identified as an academically failing school, which is defined as a school “scoring in the bottom six percent of standardized reading and math testing on the ACT Aspire” (Lyman, 2016, para. 1).

Teacher roles. The day-to-day roles of a teacher are all encompassing; however, administrators identified some areas they feel are key for an effective teacher in high-poverty. One of the roles identified by administrators was that of a disciplinarian. Beatrice gave an example of a teacher who was an excellent teacher, as far as strategy was concerned, but failed as a teacher because of his lack of discipline. She stated,

“His failure rate is 95%. He teaches. He brings in all types of manipulatives. He’s very engaged. His lesson plans are meticulous. Doing before and after strategies...but the discipline. He has a disconnect with the students... this is a huge problem today (laughs) with all the schools, especially high-poverty” (P2:98).

Gali asserted that discipline was especially important in creating a classroom culture that fosters learning. Gali stated, “I think...the teachers that have the best results here – teachers who are willing to train the kids in the beginning whether it’s I’m being tough and then you move back, and the kids fall in line. I mean everybody’s not going to do it, but it makes for a better day” (P4:102). A qualitative, longitudinal study conducted in high-poverty schools revealed that discipline was one of the five attributes that characterized effective teachers (Poplin, 2011), and yet only two of the thirteen administrators discussed this role. It could be that administrators categorized discipline as a part of addressing the cultural concerns.

Being a subject matter expert and conveying the material in a way that students understand is central to the role of a teacher. Wilma expressed, “You have to know the content and teach the content- not only teach it, but have the kids understand what you

are teaching” (P11:41). She expressed two different roles; a subject matter expert and someone who has the ability to convey the material in a way that ensures learning has occurred. There will be challenges when teaching material, but Tobias says about high-poverty students, “they’re going to have those challenges...there’s nothing, uh, we can do about it on an educational level, except for teaching the material” (P9:35). As part of being a subject matter expert, McKinley says, “...you’ve got to be knowledgeable of resources that are available to you...and you’ve got to be able to read your students to know that you see the light bulb go off and they say, ‘Oh yeah, I understand” (P7:44).

Another role identified by administrators was the ability to be a professional, specifically through the display of a person’s attitude. Tammy said, “I’m going in there to be the professional that I am and this is what I am going to do – stay away from the negativity” (P10:89). Attitudes are contagious and she felt to be an effective teacher she needed to approach her students and peers with a positive attitude. Wilma stated, “I just feel like every teacher – if you want to be an effective teacher, you’ve got to want to be here – that’s number one” (P11:39). She expressed that showing up wasn’t enough, but an effective teacher in high-poverty must have an innate desire to want to be there. She took it a step further and said that a teacher’s attitude about attendance and school is tied directly to the student, “If I’m here today, then you need to be here today. If I’m sleeping in the classroom today, then you can sleep. If I’m not sleeping in class today, then you can’t sleep” (P11:45). She felt teachers were a role model for students, and that included modeling appropriate attitudes and behaviors. Antoine agreed with Wilma’s initial assessment and said, “Because if you think this is a job, you’re crazy. A job is something

you do 9:00 to 5:00, and get a paycheck every other week. Education is not a job” (P1:160).

Teacher personality. Administrators perceive the personality of the teacher as essential to being an effective teacher in a high-poverty school and includes characteristics such as caring, engaging, patient, and fearless. The areas under the theme of teacher personality are shown in Figure 4.2.

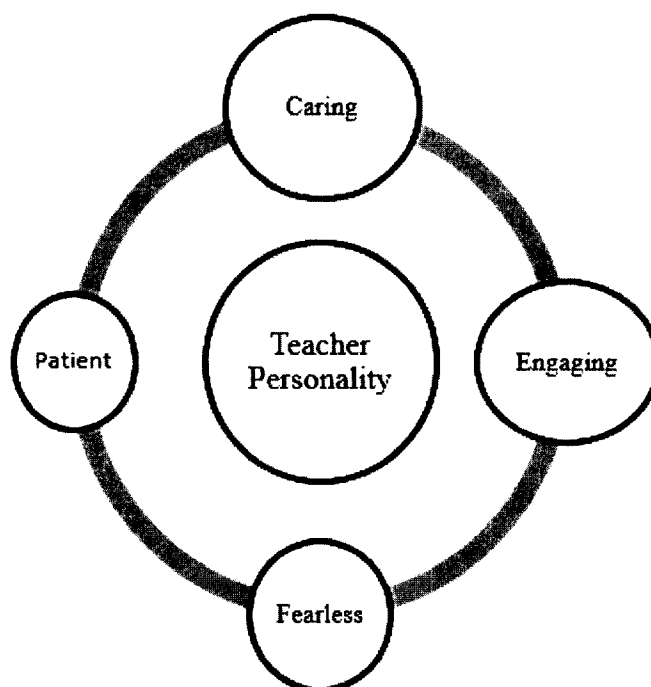


Figure 4.2. Teacher Personality

Caring. The attribute of caring was mentioned by eight of the thirteen administrators when discussing the characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. Caring was conveyed through a wide array of adjectives including the use of words such as caring, compassion, unselfish, understanding, and sympathy. Each of these words embody the personality of the teacher demonstrated through caring.

Tobias stated in regards to teaching high-poverty students, “And I go back to the word caring...it’s caring enough to understand what challenges they have” (P9:32).

Jeremy felt, “you must show them that you care for them before you even teach students coming from high-poverty (P5:27). Jeremy thought caring must be exhibited prior to learning. Gali understood that caring for students resulted in a desire for her students to change their behavior, “Ms. Gali want me to do this and they’ll try. Let me pull up my pants. Let me snatch my earphones out...it opens a door for me to, um, reach them a little bit” (P4:45). Benny, at first, felt that teachers in high-poverty schools must come from the same background; however, he decided that through the course of him talking that his initial assessment was not true. As he changed his mind, he said, in response to what attributes were needed for an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, “So, uh, caring, that’s the only thing I can say” (P3:29). Milton felt that the quality needed was, “someone who is caring” (P6:28).

Gali and Wyatt felt compassion was a characteristic of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school (P4:36; P12:43). Tammy felt teachers should “approach their task with much conviction and much compassion” (P10:38). Jeremy agreed and said, “To get kids coming from high poverty, you must be compassionate” (P5:27). Part of compassion is being an “understanding person because it is not your traditional [school]” (P4:37) or choosing to be “unselfish” (P1:46) in how students are approached by teachers. Part of this approach of caring includes “empathy for students – not sympathy, but empathy – empathize with them in their situation sometimes, especially in high poverty areas, kids go through so many different things” (P12:44). In other words, teachers must learn to put themselves in the shoes of their students and their experiences.

Engaging. The personality of a teacher who is engaging or has the ability to address multiple learning styles is needed in any learning environment, but it is

particularly important to high-poverty schools (Jensen, 2013). However, engagement was only coded nine times, by five administrators, for teachers in high-poverty schools, whereas for the definition of an effective teacher there were 43 codes by all thirteen administrators. The importance of student engagement, in high-poverty schools, is a contributing factor to student success (Cunningham, 2006/2007) and must not be negated.

Wilma said to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, “You have to be engaging. You have to be actively engaging” (P11:40). Engagement may be demonstrated by someone who “is willing to learn how to address learning styles” (P10:88). It is garnered through “flexibility” (P8:63) in how one teaches and in the ability “to be versatile” (P12:100). Woodard equated engagement to action, “You may have a lot of strategies that you can introduce to schools, but here, it’s a little bit different because you are trying to get students that are not motivated to learn” (P13:34). One administrator, Antoine, defined student engagement as the ability of the teacher to “be an edu-tainer – being able to educate and entertain at the same time – so you have to be creative” (P12:39) and “passionate” (P12:42).

Fearless. This category is a minor theme since two administrators addressed it. The terms used to describe an effective teacher in high-poverty by Antoine were “fearless” (1:43) and “courageous” (P1:45). Gali stated, “Special characteristics – you just have to be kind and you can’t be afraid. I mean you have to give up every day with a desire to reach the kids and you can’t be afraid of them” (P4:40). Gali equated fear with her experience as a child “because I, myself did not grow up around drugs” (P4:40); fear was equated with a culture that differed from her own experience.

Patience. Three administrators expressed that patience was an attribute associated with an effective teacher in high-poverty although patience was not mentioned in the definition of an effective teacher. Antoine and Sims used the word “patient” (P1:47; P8:30). Woodard expressed a teacher exhibiting characteristics of patience when he said, “Uh, the troublemakers, so to speak, after a day dealing with them, so I have to be careful how I treat them in school” (P13:29).

Summary of Research Question 1

The characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, as perceived by administrators, included two overarching themes (a) teacher responsibilities and (b) teacher personality. The first theme, teacher responsibilities encompassed (a) communication, (b) teacher roles, (c) being academically focused, and (d) addressing cultural concerns. The second theme, teacher personality, encompassed (a) caring, (b) engaging, (c) fearless, and (d) patient. These characteristics of effective teachers of high-poverty students partially aligned with the perceptions of what administrators felt define an effective teacher, without the consideration of a high-poverty environment being a factor, were somewhat similar. The themes that were unique to the attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty were (a) communication and (b) patience. The only attribute of an effective teacher not mentioned as an attribute of an effective teacher in high-poverty was teacher growth; effective teachers in high-poverty schools focused on student potential and failed to mention the importance of teacher growth.

Individual Administrator Responses to Research Question 2

Prior to comparing the administrator perceptions of what characteristics define an effective teacher of high-poverty students to the teacher evaluation system, the individual

interviews were used to explore the beliefs and attitudes administrators hold towards the teacher evaluation system. Individual interviews reveal the years of experience administrators have conducting teacher evaluations, how many evaluations an administrator completes annually, and their belief on whether the qualities of an effective teacher can be measured using the evaluation system. In addition, the individual perceptions of what comprises an effective teacher in high-poverty are compared with *EDUCATEAlabama*.

Interview one: Antoine. Antoine has administered teacher evaluations for fifteen years and evaluates twenty-five teachers annually, amounting to twenty-five to thirty-five formal observations. He observes teachers ten percent of his time, and he admits, "...that's low, but I, I do just enough where *EDUCATEAlabama* says I'm supposed to do just to do the paperwork, but I do go into classes without paperwork" (P1:63). He stated he was not formally trained to administer *EDUCATEAlabama*. In addition, Antoine feels *EDUCATEAlabama* cannot measure the attributes of which teachers are effective, specifically in high poverty schools as he expressed, "we're just doing it just to jump through the hoops and answer the paperwork" (P1:85). He showed me an evaluation of one of his teachers and explained the evaluation is completed out of obligation. As the leader of his school, it is likely that his attitude towards the evaluation tool influences his administrative and teaching staff as demonstrated in the following statement, "I'm going to say 95% of my teachers don't even go back into *EDUCATEAlabama* and look and see what I wrote" (P1:87). He expressed it was more effective to meet and discuss teacher performance than simply going into a computer to read the results of the teacher evaluation. Needless to say, he is not a fan of the

bureaucratic nature of *EDUCATEAlabama*. Much of his storytelling centered on how he mentored a younger, problematic teacher who matured into an effective and efficient teacher.

Antoine mentioned four characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, which included fearlessness, courage, unselfishness, and patience. None of the characteristics he identified as essential to a teacher in high-poverty school aligned with *EDUCATEAlabama*. Simply stated, his perception of what is integral to an effective teacher in a high-poverty school does not align with the evaluation tool; this supports his perception, mentioned above, that the evaluation tool is a perfunctory responsibility rather than an effective evaluation tool.

Interview two: Beatrice. She has conducted teacher evaluations for thirteen years and currently evaluates eleven teachers per year. *EDUCATEAlabama* offered a week of formal training that she attended, and she felt it prepared her for the evaluation process. Beatrice had conflicting responses about whether *EDUCATEAlabama* effectively evaluated the attributes of teachers. She believes the current evaluation system can measure an effective teacher and stated, “I really do, because *EDUCATEAlabama* is not really measuring the student. It’s measuring your ability and willingness to learn” (P2:91). However, she said a barrier to the current evaluation system was, “*EDUCATEAlabama* is not evaluating the teacher” (P2:98). These statements are in direct juxtaposition of one another; it appears as if she is uncertain if *EDUCATEAlabama* evaluates the teacher.

The attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty school, according to Beatrice, are someone who communicates effectively, has a special skillset for those in

poverty, and needs to “step back and learn from them [students] then – learn and listen to students” (P2:46). She felt “being able to communicate effectively with the students. That’s number one. And everyone, or all teachers, are not able or equipped to do that” (P2:45). The attributes she mentioned do align with four of the areas on *EDUCATEAlabama*, with the exception of *Professionalism*, but there are still multiple gaps. Overall, the evaluation tool is not effective to measure the attributes Beatrice mentioned. Beatrice feels, regardless of the results, that the evaluation tool should not be different for high-poverty schools.

Interview three: Benny. There are approximately 100 teachers at Benny’s school; the evaluation is divided among all the administrators giving him the responsibility of evaluating twenty-one teachers. Each teacher is observed on three separate occasions; once formally and twice informally. Regarding training he said, “A lot of training I received, I did on my own by figuring things out. I could’ve been playing, but, um, every year, we do have *EDUCATEAlabama* training. Got to begin with the school year, twice a year, honestly. The beginning of the school year and a little bit before we close” (P3:59-61). The preparation, as indicated in his interview, helped him to feel adequately trained to evaluate teachers according to the guidelines set forth by *EDUCATEAlabama*.

He felt that the attributes of an effective teacher are “outside the scope” (P3:83) of *EDUCATEAlabama*. While he believes the current evaluation tool “doesn’t evaluate caring” (P3:83), he does feel it is adequate to determine which teachers are effective in high-poverty schools. Benny acknowledges, “Nothing is going to be perfect. It doesn’t matter. It’s the most effective way with how busy we are, and how often we have to

observe teachers. It's the most effective one [evaluation tool]" (P3:86-87). While Benny felt caring to be an admirable quality that can certainly be a motivating factor in everything a teacher does, *EDUCATEAlabama* does not measure this attribute. Therefore, *EDUCATEAlabama* would not be an effective tool to measure the attribute of caring.

Interview four: Gali. Gali has been administering teacher evaluations for eight years. Regarding the number of teacher evaluations, she responded, "This year I have more than we had in the past, because now everybody is on full evaluation. In the past I might have had about fifteen people; um, now, I think I have about twenty-five" (P4:53-54). She feels adequately prepared to administer teacher evaluations since the state requires annual training. An integral part of teacher evaluations is the observation component, and Gali said she conducts observations, "I'll say formally, twice a year, but informally I would probably say once a month" (P4:68-69). She responded that the attributes of an effective teacher could be measured, but then said, "I mean, you can, um document what you see certain things, but in terms of measuring it, I think that would be very difficult" (P4:78-79). When asked if *EDUCATEAlabama* was a helpful tool, in determining which teachers were effective in a high-poverty schools, she avoided the question, even when redirected, and responded that she liked "it better than PEPE (Professional Education Personnel Evaluation)" (P4:82-83), which was the former teacher evaluation system in Alabama.

Gali feels the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school are caring/compassion, understanding, "willing to sacrifice or surrender a little bit of leadership in your classroom, um, and the kids to make it their own" (P4:40). Caring and

understanding, under the theme of *Teacher Personality*, did not align with *EDUCATEAlabama*. Having the “kids make it their own” (P4:40) was under *Teacher Responsibility – Academically Focused* and did align with *Content Knowledge, Teaching and Learning*, and Diversity under *EDUCATEAlabama*.

Interview five: Jeremy. Jeremy had been administering teacher evaluations for two years and responded that he only completed “on average, uh, two a year” (P5:54), but he does observe teachers twice a year and conducts weekly “spot checks, kind of a walk through” (P5:71). The state did provide a one-day training session on *EDUCATEAlabama*. He was asked if the training adequately prepared him, and he said, “Uh, but training of such, you start to be less interested after a while, so you then come and then you just tweak it the way it needs to be” (P5:64). In the interview, he alluded that the assistant principals worked as a team to help train one another on the evaluation system.

In response to whether the attributes of an effective teacher can be measured using *EDUCATEAlabama*, his response was, “No. Um, it’s like one-size-fits-all with *EDUCATEAlabama*. It doesn’t have the flexibility to input, um, character issues or issues that make those teachers different from the next teacher” (P5:87-88). When asked more specifically if *EDUCATEAlabama* could determine which teachers are effective, specifically in high-poverty schools, he gave a similar answer, and said,

Uh, I don’t think *EDUCATEAlabama* measures, uh, a teacher who teaches in high-poverty areas, because you have a high learning disability in poverty areas, where if you could take a student whose reading at a third-grade level

and take him to the fourth-grade level, that's achievement and

EDUCATEAlabama don't measure that (P5:90).

He believed that *EDUCATEAlabama* was not an effective tool for measuring the characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. In other words, Jeremy believed the current evaluation system is not a definitive way to measure teacher effectiveness, regardless of the socioeconomic status of the school; he also believed there is no substitute for regular observation and the mentoring relationship.

Jeremy's feelings about the ineffectiveness of the teacher evaluation were not supported through the analysis. He described three attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school: (a) dedication under the theme Teacher Responsibility – Teacher Role, (b) compassion/caring under the theme of Teacher Personality - Caring, and (c) dependability under the theme of Teacher Responsibility –Teacher Role. The attributes of dependability and dedication under the theme of Teacher Role aligned sporadically to every major category in *EDUCATEAlabama*, with the exception of Professionalism.

Interview six: Milton. Milton has administered teacher evaluations for two years, so he is one of the administrators with the least amount of experience. He administers evaluations for approximately fifteen teachers and conducts observations two times a month. Since he is new to *EDUCATEAlabama*, he said he received “extensive training” (P6:61). In addition, he responded with, “And, not only that, with, with this being my first, my first year as an administrator, an assistant principal is my mentor” (P6:61). He explained that his mentor knew a lot more about the evaluation system, “She knows it, and she would come to me, “Milton, you need this. Milton, do this. Milton, I am going to show you how I would do it. But now, you've got to have your own way of

doing things” (P6:64-65). While he did receive formal training, the mentor relationship seemed to be the training that best prepared him to conduct teacher evaluations.

Milton was unsure, likely due to his lack of experience with *EDUCATEAlabama*, about whether the current evaluation system could measure the attributes of an effective teacher. Referring to the committee that came up with the evaluation tool, “Yes and no. If there is someone that has been to the ranks of low-poverty, schools and they know the ins-and-outs of it, yeah. But if it’s someone who’s always talking of the magnet schools....you don’t have a feeling for it” (P6:82-83).

Milton’s attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school did not align with *EDUCATEAlabama*. For the attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty, he said, “Someone who is caring. Uh, someone that has a sense of love, uh, you got a kid, you go to love them. But you, you got to go beyond the, the order of just teaching...build another relationship with them besides here at school” (P6:43-44). A caring teacher is likely a motivating factor behind some of the subcategories of *EDUCATEAlabama*, but cannot be measured using the evaluation tool.

Interview seven: McKinley. McKinley has sixteen years of experience with administering teacher evaluations, and he said he has “to do twelve a week” (P7:56). He attended training on *EDUCATEAlabama*, but he said, with a chuckle, “Alright, I received what everybody went through, um, it was a training for what we were looking for and what we are looking at” (P7:63). When asked if he was adequately trained on the current evaluation tool, he replied, “I think it can be improved, now exactly to what extent, I’m not 100% sure” (P7:68).

Each of the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, mentioned by McKinley, aligned with *EDUCATEAlabama*. For instance, knowing the students (Academically Focused) and adjusting teaching (Teacher Roles) aligned to every major category of *EDUCATEAlabama* with the exception of Professionalism. Communicating effectively, under the theme of Teacher Responsibility aligned with the major categories of Teaching and Learning, Literacy, and Diversity in *EDUCATEAlabama*. However, many of the sub-categories of the evaluation tool did not align, so it would not be an effective way to measure the attributes of teachers.

Interview eight: Sims. Sims has been administering teacher evaluations for approximately thirteen years, and evaluates approximately twelve teachers annually. While formal evaluations are only required two times a year for each teacher, he still finds time to observe teachers “almost every day” (P8:72).

Training was offered at the local, state, and central office level. Sims felt that he was adequately prepared to administer *EDUCATEAlabama* primarily due to how people help one another as referenced, “Uh, here at the school, we help each other out a lot with something I don’t know or something I do know. We share and help each other from school to school, from administrator to administrator” (P8:66). Sims alluded to the fact that everyday assistance is more effective than a one-time training session.

The evaluation, according to Sims, cannot measure the attributes of an effective teacher, regardless of the type of school, and he feels, “Um, it needs to be tweaked. Like I said, that to hold a teacher here – or at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED] or at the other schools, [REDACTED] – the same way you hold somebody at STAR...you’ve got to give us a little bit more leeway. We need a little bit more leeway” (P8:87-88). It is evident that Sims

feels the state evaluation tool should have different standards for high-poverty schools and academic magnet schools.

Sims' negative attitude towards the evaluation system were confirmed when his beliefs were compared to *EDUCATEAlabama*. The attributes of being flexible/versatile came under Teacher Personality. The attribute of engaging aligned with multiple areas of the evaluation tool, including Content Knowledge, Teaching and Learning, and Diversity. Patience did not align with *EDUCATEAlabama*. With the limited number of attributes, *EDUCATEAlabama* would not be an effective evaluation tool.

Interview nine: Tobias. Tobias has been administering teacher evaluations for ten years. He formally evaluates teachers once a week and informally observes teachers up to three times a week. However, a few questions later in the interview, he made it clear that he observed teachers "on a daily basis" (P9:70). In response to whether he received proper training on using the evaluation tool, he said, "I think so" (P9:64).

The attributes of an effective teacher would be hard to measure using the current evaluation model, as demonstrated when he stated, "You can sort of see it, it's sort of there; there are some things in the instrument that would measure that (referring to the ability of *EDUCATEAlabama* to measure attributes of teachers)" (P9:82). However, like most interviewees, he did not feel that *EDUCATEAlabama* was effective, specifically for high-poverty schools. In response to the effectiveness of *EDUCATEAlabama* he said, "No, I don't (think it is effective)" (P9:85).

The attribute, caring, did not align with *EDUCATEAlabama*. Once again, caring has been mentioned by multiple administrators, has a ubiquitous effect on teaching but cannot be measured. The ability for students to receive exposure to experiences or the

teacher's ability to relate to students is under the theme of Teacher Responsibility – Addressing Cultural Concerns has been sporadically addressed in every category of *EDUCATEAlabama* except for Literacy. Providing hope is under the theme of Teacher Responsibility – Academically Focused, and did not align to Literacy and Professionalism.

Interview ten: Tammy. Tammy has been conducting evaluations since she became an administrator over twenty years ago. She discussed the evolution of teacher evaluations during her tenure and how they have become “...more bureaucratic. And the way it is now, you just need a team of people to do this all day; they don't do anything else other than evaluate” (P10:60). While she evaluates ten teachers a year, informal evaluations are done on a daily basis.

In response to whether the attributes of an effective teacher can be measured using the current evaluation system, she responded, “No. Okay, because that's part of the problem, and so we know what makes an effective teacher, what characteristics and qualities – but then the evaluation system doesn't measure it” (P10:86). She also believes *EDUCATEAlabama* is an ineffective tool for determining which teachers are effective in high-poverty schools. Regarding the evaluation system, she feels, “*EDUCATEAlabama* itself is a barrier” (P10:92).

While Tammy felt *EDUCATEAlabama* was not an effective evaluation tool, some of the attributes she identified did align with the tool. The attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty included being passionate, caring/compassionate, and a subject matter expert. As far as these attributes alignment with *EDUCATEAlabama*, (a) caring, under the theme of Teacher Personality did not align; (b) passionate, under the theme of

Teacher Personality – Engaging, aligned with four of the five categories; (c) a subject matter expert, under the theme of Teacher Responsibility – Teacher Roles, aligned with all categories but Professionalism. Tammy was the only administrator to address the final area of *EDUCATEAlabama, Professionalism*, although it was not addressed as an attribute of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school.

Interview eleven: Wilma. Wilma administers the highest number of teacher evaluations of any of the administrators, with an astounding thirty-eight a year. There are approximately a hundred teachers in her school with multiple administrators and she still conducts the majority of the evaluations. Her explanation of this phenomenon is simply stated, “Mr. Hane (the principal) loves me the most because I’m the paper person (laughs sarcastically)” (P11:53). Due to the sheer amount of evaluations, she typically conducts formal observations three times a week unless she gets behind due to other duties. Informal observations are done by “walking through because I want them to get used to seeing me in the room” (P11:69). On an impromptu walk-thru, she often provides notes to teachers as feedback and to encourage them.

In the course of the interview, she tried to pull up several online evaluations, but the district computer system was down. She felt the attributes of an effective teacher could be measured by *EDUCATEAlabama* although she said, “Yes, they can think of anything to measure. Do I think they should? No, I don’t” (P11:81). Her opinion hinged on the fact that she felt the evaluation put “more stress on teachers” (P11:81). When asked if *EDUCATEAlabama* was effective in determining which teachers were effective in high-poverty schools, Wilma felt the evaluation should not be different and “it is effective [to determine effectiveness of teachers in high-poverty schools]” (P11:85). She

acknowledged that *EDUCATEAlabama* can measure attributes of an effective teacher, regardless of the socioeconomic level of the school, but that does not mean it is advantageous.

Wilma mentioned six attributes of an effective teacher of a high-poverty school: (a) a desire to be at the school, (b) actively engage students, (c) know the content and teach the content, (d) involve kids in learning, (e) connect content to real-life, and (f) teach with the expectation. These characteristics, when compared to *EDUCATEAlabama*, revealed the following results: (a) a desire to be at school and know/teach content were under the theme, Teacher Responsibility – Teacher Roles, and aligned with all of the categories except for Literacy and Professionalism; (b) actively engage students and involve kids in learning were under the theme, Teacher Personality – Engaging, and aligned with Content Knowledge, Teaching and Learning, and Diversity.

Interview twelve: Wyatt. Wyatt has administered teacher evaluations for five years. He mentioned the former evaluation system took into account student scores, whereas “*EDUCATEAlabama* is a more formative, just trying to get feedback, looking for growth” (P12:48). While he formally evaluates “eight to ten teachers a year” (P12:51), he observes teachers, “Every single day I’m at work” (P12:67). Although he did not feel *EDUCATEAlabama* measured the attributes of effective teachers, he did feel it was adequate in determining which teachers are effective and a “teachers plan to work on for improvement” (P12:78), specifically in high-poverty schools. However, he responded with a contradictory statement, “I think, it, um, I think it serves the purpose that the State Department intended for it to serve, which may not necessarily determine teacher effectiveness, as much as it does the growth of the teacher” (P12:81). This begs

the question, “Is teacher effectiveness tied to teacher growth?” According to Wyatt, “...teacher effectiveness, this is personal opinion, but I think it must be coupled – it just can’t be an evaluation system. I think it needs to be coupled with data as well” (P12:81-82). He believed the data to determine an effective teacher in high-poverty schools should include the teacher failure rate, teacher attendance, test scores for students – combined with the formal evaluation.

The attributes he perceived as necessary for an effective teacher in a high-poverty school included creativity, passion, caring, being empathetic, and the ability to relate to students. Creativity and passion, under the theme of Teacher Personality – Engaging, did not align with Literacy and Professionalism under the evaluation tool. Caring and empathy, under the theme of Teacher Personality – Caring, did not align with any portion of the evaluation tool. The ability to relate to students, under the theme of Teacher Responsibility – Addressing Cultural Concerns, addressed all areas except for Literacy.

Interview thirteen: Woodard. Woodard has administered teacher evaluations for eleven years, although this is his fifth year administering *EDUCATEAlabama*. On an annual basis, he typically administers thirty to thirty-five teacher evaluations. While *EDUCATEAlabama* requires two formal observations per teacher, Woodard observes teachers, “Daily, but, um every time I’ll be in their [classroom] for five to ten minutes” (P13:72).

When asked if the attributes of an effective teacher can be measured using the current evaluation system, he did not directly answer the question. He responded with, “Um, I think *EDUCATEAlabama*, I think it’s all about, um, classroom observation and going in and seeing what they do, um, will determine that piece – um, coupled with

professional development” (P13:85). Indirectly, he answered the question by implying that *EDUCATEAlabama* does not measure the attributes of an effective teacher. When questioned whether the evaluation tool determines the effectiveness of a teacher, specifically in high-poverty schools, he said, “Um, I think it covers all schools, in general” (P13:88). I followed up by asking him a second time if *EDUCATEAlabama* was effective for measuring teachers in high-poverty, and he answered, “I think so. I think so. Yeah” (P13:89). In addition, he did not feel there were any barriers that existed with teacher evaluations.

The attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school included noticing students and their capabilities (potential) and employing a wide range of strategies to reach students. Noticing students and their capabilities, under the theme of Teacher Responsibility – Academically Focused, aligned with three of the categories of the evaluation tool and excluded two – Literacy and Professionalism. Employing a wide range of strategies, under the theme of Teacher Personality – Engaging, and aligned with Content Knowledge, Teaching and Learning, and Diversity.

Research Question 2: Characteristics Administrators Perceive as Important to be an Effective Teacher in a High-Poverty School and Their Alignment with the Alabama Teacher Evaluation System, *EDUCATEAlabama*

EDUCATEAlabama (2014) identifies five primary areas of the teacher evaluation system: (a) content knowledge, which includes knowledge of subject matter; activating the student’s prior knowledge and experience; connecting curriculum to real-life; designing instructional activities based on state content and standards; and providing instructional accommodations and adaptations to meet the needs of the individual learner,

(b) teaching and learning, which includes organizing and managing the learning environment; using instructional strategies; and assessing and learning, (c) literacy, which includes oral and written communication; developing of reading skills and accessing K-12 literacy resources, as applicable to subject area; developing and applying of mathematical knowledge and skills as applicable to subject area; and utilizing technology, (d) diversity, which includes cultural, ethnic, and social diversity; language diversity (applies to schools/classrooms where language diversity exists, for others N/A); special needs and learning styles; and, (e) professionalism, which includes collaborating with stakeholders to facilitate learning and well-being; engaging in ongoing professional learning; participating as a professional learning community member in advancing school improvement initiatives; promoting professional ethics and integrity; and complying with local, state, and federal regulations and policies. The *EDUCATEAlabama* Collaborative Teacher Evaluation Continua has four spectrums on the continuum, dependent upon on effectiveness of the teacher. The areas are Emerging, Applying, Integrating, and Innovating; these areas will not be considered relevant to this research. The purpose of this study is to see if the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, as perceived by administrators, align with the overall criteria in *EDUCATEAlabama*.

Prior to delving into the results for Research Question 2, it is imperative to understand the experiences and backgrounds of the administrators in relation to teacher evaluations. Twelve of the thirteen administrators received formal training on *EDUCATEAlabama*, and eleven of thirteen administrators felt the training adequately prepared them to evaluate teachers. On average, these administrators evaluate approximately 20 teachers per year. Administrator experience with evaluating teachers

varied drastically; the average experience is eight years. However, seven of the administrators had ten or more years of experience evaluating teachers, two administrators had between five and eight years of experience, and three administrators had under three years of experience.

Data revealed the majority of the themes derived from interviews on an effective teacher in high-poverty schools, as perceived by high-poverty administrators, did not align with the evaluation tool, *EDUCATEAlabama*. After an analysis of the attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty, a six-step process, as discussed in Chapter 3, was completed to systematically compare the characteristics of an effective teacher in high-poverty attribute with *EDUCATEAlabama*, using the Collaborative Summary Report, the Teacher Self-Assessment, and the Principal Observation Form (POF). The Collaborative Summary Report and the Teacher Self-Assessment were used to ensure that the results were valid and reliable; each document is a shorter version of the Principal Observation Form (POF). Table 4.3 demonstrates the results from the comparison of characteristics, identified by administrators, of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school with the Principal Observation Form of *EDUCATEAlabama*, focusing on categories that did not align.

Table 4.3. Results from the Principal Observation form – items that do not align

Principal Observation Form (POF)	Perception of characteristics of high-poverty that did not align with the POF categories	Percentage that did not align
Content Knowledge	9 of 18 categories did not align	50%
Teaching and Learning	17 of 37 categories did not align	46%
Literacy	27 of 33 categories did not align	82%
Diversity	21 of 33 categories did not align	70%
Professionalism	27 of 44 categories did not align	61%
Total Categories 162	Categories that did not align 119	TOTAL 73.5%

The results, as addressed above, show 119 of 162 subcategories of the Principal Observation Form of *EDUCATEAlabama*, or 73.5%, did not align with the attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty identified by interviewees. The subcategories of the POF were compared with the attributes of an effective teacher, as identified by interviewees, and the results were: (a) Content Knowledge – nine of the eighteen subcategories, or 50%, did not align; (b) Teaching and Learning – seventeen of thirty-seven subcategories, or 46%, did not align; (c) Literacy – twenty-seven of thirty-three subcategories, or 82%, did not align; (d) Diversity – twenty-one of the thirty subcategories, or 70%, did not align; and (e) Professionalism – twenty-seven of the forty-four subcategories, or 61.4%, did not align.

The primary themes, from interviews, identified the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school were teacher responsibility and teacher personality. When identifying how the themes aligned with the Principal Observation Form of *EDUCATEAlabama*, forty-five attributes aligned to teacher responsibility and thirteen

attributes aligned to teacher personality. It is important to note that multiple attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty aligned with a single subcategory of the Principal Observation Form. For teacher responsibility, the following is the breakdown of the attributes administrators identified as essential to an effective teacher in high-poverty, compared to the 162 subcategories of the Principal Observation Form (POF) included (a) the attribute of *communication* aligned nine times with the POF, (b) the attribute of *teacher roles* aligned sixteen times with the POF, (c) the attribute of *being academically focused* aligned thirteen times with the POF, and (d) the attribute of *addressing cultural concerns* aligned seven times with POF. The theme of teacher personality, as derived from interviews, aligned significantly less with the Principal Observation Form of *EDUCATEAlabama* and showed (a) the attribute of *engaging* aligned thirteen times with the POF, and (b) the attributes of *caring*, *fearless*, and *patient* did not align at all with the Principal Observation Form. Table 4.4 synthesizes the information that did align.

Table 4.4. Results from the Principal Observation form – items that do align

Primary themes identified by administrators – effective teachers in high-poverty	Areas within each theme that aligned with the Principal Observation Form of <i>EDUCATEAlabama</i> (EA)	Times a theme aligned with EA	Total
Teacher Responsibility	• Academically focused	9	45
	• Teacher Roles	16	
	• Addressing Cultural Concerns	13	
	• Communication	7	
Teacher Personality	• Engaging	13	13
	• Caring	0	
	• Patience	0	
	• Fearless	0	

As mentioned, five primary categories comprise the *EDUCATEAlabama* evaluation tool. Attributes of effective high-poverty teachers, identified from the interviews, coded into every major category of the Principal Observation Form. However, there were no attributes coded into multiple subcategories of four of the major categories. The subcategories of *EDUCATEAlabama* that did not align with any attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty were: (a) Content Knowledge – the subcategory of designed instructional activities based on state content standards; (b) Literacy – the subcategories of integrates narrative and expository reading strategies across the curriculum; teacher problem solving which requires mathematical skills within and across subject areas; communicates mathematical concepts, processes and symbols with the content taught; identifies and integrates available emerging technology into the teaching of all content areas, and facilitates learners’ individual and collaborative use of technology and evaluates their technology proficiency, (c) Diversity – the subcategories of demonstrates and applies his/her own practice and understanding of how cultural biases affect teaching and learning; enables learners to accelerate language acquisition by utilizing their native language and background; guides second language acquisition and utilizes English Language Development strategies to support learning and, (d) Professionalism – the subcategories of promotes professional ethics and integrity; and complies with local, state, and federal regulations and policies.

Although the area, Content Knowledge, partially aligned with the attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty, it is worth noting that the area of Content Knowledge is not supported by research as noted in a longitudinal study, in Alabama, of two hundred and nine schools; principal perception felt content mastery mattered little in determining

the effectiveness of a teacher (Morrow et al., 1985). The major category of Diversity would be difficult, at least in the way it is defined in *EDUCATEAlabama*, to be addressed appropriately once the background of the schools are taken into consideration. Each of the four high schools had an extremely small non-English speaking population ranging from twelve to sixty-five students per school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012); thus, the sub-category, Language Diversity, would likely be not applicable for many teacher evaluations. In addition, the last major category of the evaluation tool, Professionalism, was addressed in the interviews by eight of the administrators, but not as an attribute of an effective teacher of high-poverty students. Administrators did reference *PD360*, a district-wide online learning tool, used to enhance the skills of a teacher, but did not address professionalism as laid out in *EDUCATEAlabama*. In other words, there were teachers who discussed professionalism in the interviews, but they did not incorporate the attributes of professionalism with the effectiveness of a teacher of high-poverty students.

While the analysis of the teacher evaluation system with the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school is an integral part of this study, it is necessary to focus on the attributes, identified by administrators, which define an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. The primary characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, as perceived by administrators, in order of importance, were (a) addressing cultural issues, (b) caring, and (c) teacher roles. The minor characteristics identified were (a) academically focused, (b) communication, (c) engaging, (d) fearless, and (e) patient. However, when attributes were compared to the evaluation tool, the attributes that aligned most frequently, in order, were (a) teacher roles, (b) engaging and

academically focused tied for second, (c) communication, and (d) addressing cultural concerns. The attributes of caring, fearless, and patient did not align with any portion of the evaluation tool. The lack of alignment of the perception of what administrators feel defines an effective teacher in a high-poverty school with *EDUCATEAlabama* could have a negative, ubiquitous effect on teacher evaluations. The current evaluation system, according to this study, is not effective for measuring the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, at least not from a holistic perspective.

Barriers to *EDUCATEAlabama*. When asked if the current evaluation tool could measure the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, eight of the thirteen administrators felt the current evaluation system could not determine effective teachers in high-poverty, while the other five administrators felt it could measure an effective teacher in high-poverty. Administrators were asked if they felt there were any barriers to *EDUCATEAlabama*. Nine administrators felt there were barriers, three administrators felt there were no barriers, and one administrator felt there were pros and cons to the current evaluation tool. In spite of their initial responses, ten administrators named barriers to *EDUCATEAlabama*; their perceptions were coded into two areas (a) design of the instrument, and (b) measurement of the instrument.

As a barrier to *EDUCATEAlabama*, the design of the instrument garnered responses from the majority of administrators. They perceived that the evaluation tool was too subjective, required too much time or paperwork, and was not a tool to propel change in teacher behaviors or practices. One principal, Antoine, stated in relation to the

copious amounts of time he felt the evaluation tool required,

“It has to be less paperwork and more teaching. You know, I’m sitting here filling out all this paperwork. This is crap. Matter of fact, before long, I stop seeing the teacher, and I’m gonna just start forwarding the paperwork...so you’ll get off my behind” (P1:121).

Tammy agreed and described the evaluation tool as “more bureaucratic, and the way it is now, you just need a team of people doing this all day” (P10:52). Jeremy felt in light of all an administrator is obligated to perform, that administrators “don’t have time to focus on, uh, making teachers better” (P5:56).

Another barrier of evaluation is its inability to propel changes in staffing. Wyatt expressed his thoughts on the matter, “Teacher evaluations are really not linked...to...I hate to say termination...I think evaluation should be tied to a person’s ability to maintain or lose their job” (P 12:87). Wilma felt that the evaluation tool identified areas for change, but teachers were not required to change. She stated, “...the barriers are when you lay it [the evaluation] out there for teachers, and you give it to them, and they still don’t want to make a change” (P11:85).

The second theme identified as a barrier to *EDUCATEAlabama* is the inability of the tool to adequately measure teacher progress. The evaluation does not “tie in student achievement – are kids improving...?” (P4:67). Jeremy expressed the tools inability to measure specific populations when he stated,

“I don’t think that *EDUCATEAlabama* measures teachers who teach in high-poverty areas, because you have a high learning disability in poverty areas...if you could take a student who’s reading at third grade level and

take him to a fourth grade level, that's achievement, and *EDUCATEAlabama* doesn't measure that" (P5:55).

He goes onto to explain that this evaluation doesn't take into account "what a teacher in a high poverty area has to deal with, with the students" (P5:55). There is no differentiation in the evaluation system, and it is a "one-size-fits all" (P5:65). Sims felt that a high-poverty school should have a "bit more leeway" (P8:54) than a magnet school. The literature review highlighted this perception, as evaluation tools often negate to factor in those issues that are outside of a teacher's control (Mangiante, 2011; Wright et al., 1997). To highlight this area of contention, Sims said, "some things you can control and some things you cannot control, like the student. And should the teacher be accountable for that one who would not learn no matter what the circumstances?" (P8:36).

EDUCATEAlabama, unlike other evaluation tools used throughout the country, does not use data as part of the evaluation process. Its link to very little data, and two administrators felt "it needs to be coupled with data" (P12:86) or be more "data intensive" (P9:48). One administrator said it was too subjective, especially for an administrator who is unfamiliar with a subject; for instance, "I'm not a real math person. History or science? No problem" (P8:40).

Additional Theme

After re-reading the transcripts, it became apparent that many of the interviewees mentioned the magnet school – often as a competitor and occasionally as a model for education. Five of the thirteen administrators had previous experience working in a magnet school, and one administrator had children graduate from the academic magnet school. Ten of the thirteen administrators expressed their perceptions of the magnet

school in comparison to high-poverty schools. Interestingly enough, two of the administrators who had previously worked in magnet schools were not a part of the ten administrators who expressed their views. Three of the interviewees wanted the “regular” schools to embrace the academic standards of the magnet schools and implement the same level of accountability. Five administrators believed there should be different expectations for high-poverty schools and magnet schools.

The majority of those who expressed their views about the magnet schools felt that a high-poverty school should have different standards and expectations than magnet schools. Their perception was that the magnet school differed in the academic ability of students and the characteristics of an effective teacher; this view exacerbated their belief that a high-poverty school is exponentially more difficult and taxing to teach in compared to a magnet school. The perception was “if their [teachers] strengths are working in a magnet school, they’re useless” (P6:33) and when he served in a magnet school, he “felt useless because those kids didn’t need me. They may come from a single parent household, but the income is \$70,000, so they’re doing good” (P6:34). Tammy reiterated this belief, as she stated why she did not want to work in a magnet school, “I didn’t want to do that, because I recognized the STAR students- academically and whatever else – were going to be okay, but the other traditional students needed someone...” (P10:30). These perceptions are based on the belief that working in a lower socioeconomic school is the only place that teachers are truly needed, and that more affluent or magnet school students need different types of teachers.

Tobias felt that students in high-poverty schools were academically behind magnet schools when he said, “...minority students are lagging, and the majority of

minorities are in the traditional high schools, whereas the higher performance students are in the magnet schools” (P9:55). Due to poor student performance, Sims stated, “...to hold a teacher here...the same way you hold somebody at STAR, you know, you’ve got to give us a little bit more leeway” (P8:54). He believed that more leeway was needed at a traditional school because “you deal with a lot more than, like for example, STAR. You wouldn’t deal with the pressures of the neighborhood like we have here in the community” (P8:32).

Woodard believed that high-poverty students required specific teaching strategies compared to magnet school students; he conveyed, “I’ll give you an example that...in a magnet school has the cream of the crop. It’s not really, uh, a challenge of teaching. Here it’s a little different because you are trying to get some students who are not motivated” (P13:33). Wyatt expressed a similar belief when he stated, “...anybody can teach a smart kid, or anyone can teach a good [kid], but it takes a special person to really deal with those kids who are not good kids or not labelled necessarily smart kids, uh, in high poverty” (P12:94).

Three administrators expressed a juxtaposition in the view towards magnet schools. One of the administrators who worked in a magnet school for seven years pointed the responsibility away from poverty when she said, “poverty is no excuse; it starts at home” (P10:7). Wyatt stated that he asks teachers, “...why can’t we teach them like it’s a magnet school...just because we’re not a magnet school, why can’t you have high expectations of yourself and of the students?” (P11:46). The third administrator who had a daughter graduate from a magnet school explained her belief about high-

poverty schools,

“We shouldn’t be treated any differently than regular schools because our goal will be defeating the purpose if we say our standards are not the same. We want high standards for all so we need to work towards meeting STAR. I have expectations of them” (p2:73).

These administrators have high expectations for high-poverty students, and the desire for teachers and students to be held to the standard exemplified by magnet schools.

Summary

Interviews provided in-depth insight into the unique personalities and beliefs of administrators, including their perception of the characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school and the alignment with the state evaluation tool,

EDUCATEAlabama. Administrators, with unique backgrounds and varying degrees of experience in high-poverty schools, provided their perception on what attributes defined or described an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. All themes were coded into two overarching themes of: (a) *teacher responsibility*, which includes communication, teacher roles, being academically focused, and addressing cultural concerns; and (b) *teacher personality*, which encompassed caring, engaging, fearless, and patience. The alignment of these characteristics with *EDUCATEAlabama* was a laborious process that revealed that over 70% of the attributes did not align with the teacher evaluation tool.

While there were some attributes that aligned, the gaps could not be ignored.

EDUCATEAlabama is clearly not designed, according to the perception of administrators, to measure many of the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school; therefore, the evaluation tool and administrators are often at odds with what defines an effective teacher in a high-poverty school.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion of Findings

Poverty has a profound impact on students, teachers, and administrators. Extensive research in the area of poverty and education has shown that students in poverty have academic, social, and emotional disadvantages when compared to their wealthier counterparts. These difficulties include: (a) stressors, cognitive lags, and health and safety issues (Jensen, 2009); (b) lower attendance rates (White et al., 2012); (c) lower graduation rates (Hernandez, 2012); (d) trouble formulating and discussing concepts (Pogrow, 2009); and, (e) are behind academically, exacerbating the achievement gap (Haskins et al., 2012). In spite of these hindrances, poverty does not have to equal failure for these students. No difficulty is insurmountable, and students in poverty can overcome obstacles to succeed emotionally, socially, and academically (Howey, 1999; Jensen, 2009).

The greatest contributor to the success of students is an effective teacher (Berry et al., 2009; Donaldson, 2011; Haberman, 1995). Teachers of high-poverty students must no longer embrace the *pedagogy of poverty* (Haberman, 2010). Instead, it is critical that teachers integrate the characteristics that an effective teacher in poverty needs to ensure their students are successful in and out of the classroom. Students in poverty often receive a less than equitable education (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Murnane, 2007); while

technology, beautiful buildings, and resources are important, an equitable education for high-poverty students begins with an effective teacher, specifically a teacher who is highly qualified to work with high-poverty students (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2009). Silcock (1993) said, “Good teachers make good schools,” (p.1) and high-poverty schools cannot be successful without effective teachers.

While the role of the teacher surpasses any other role, the presence of the administrator cannot be discounted. The second greatest influence in a successful school is the administrator (Range et al., 2012; The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2011). In fact, the administrator contributes considerably to the success of the school (Donaldson, 2011; Fullan, 2006) and student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). Thus, this research rested on the premise of the perceptions of administrators concerning teacher effectiveness. The administrator’s role cannot be understated in determining the effectiveness of the teacher (Bridwell, 2012). The expectations the administrator communicates to teachers is often a motivating factor in what tasks the teacher undertakes, specifically since the administrator conducts the formal observations and yearly evaluation. Teacher evaluations should be data-driven; however, the relationship between the principal and teacher plays an important role (Strong et al., 2011), and the subjective nature of observations certainly affects evaluations (Ellermeyer, 1992).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of administrators regarding the characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school and align the identified characteristics with the state evaluation system, *EDUCATEAlabama*. The characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school were investigated through

the use of a semi-structured interview (Appendix D). The characteristics of effective teachers in high-poverty schools, as perceived by the administrators, were aligned with the teacher evaluation system.

Trustworthiness

The role of the researcher was integral to this study. Each interview was conducted face-to-face, which helped in clarification of verbal cues, including tone, volume, articulation, and pitch along with nonverbal cues, including gestures, eye contact, posture, facial expressions, and appearance. The triangulation of the face-to-face interviews, personal notes, and audio recordings allowed the researcher to listen and evaluate the interviews on multiple occasions, consistently comparing the first impression with the recorded interviews for an unbiased approach (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The use of Atlas.ti, a qualitative research software, along with manual coding, allowed for a thorough analysis of the characteristics of an effective teacher as described by administrators in the interviews. Grounded theory, used to define social constructs, was the foundation of the study; administrators defined the social construct of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided this study:

1. What characteristics do administrators perceive as necessary to be an effective teacher for students of poverty?
2. Do the characteristics that administrators perceive as important to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school align with the Alabama teacher evaluation system known as *EDUCATEAlabama*?

Research Question 1. What characteristics do administrators perceive as necessary to be an effective teacher for students of poverty?

The interviews led to the results of the first research question and were conducted with high school administrators from all the high-poverty schools in a mid-size southern town, in January and February of 2015. The interviews elicited the response of administrators concerning the characteristics they felt encompassed an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. Each administrator aligned a group of characteristics to an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, although only seven of thirteen administrators felt unique qualities were needed for a teacher in a lower socioeconomic school versus a higher socioeconomic school.

The primary characteristics, identified by administrators, as important to an effective teacher in a high-poverty school were (a) addressing cultural concerns, (b) caring, and (c) teacher roles. Educational research supports the administrators' perceptions of what major attributes are needed to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, with the exception of content knowledge under teacher roles. Eleven of thirteen administrators identified the need to address cultural issues as a necessary trait for effective teachers in high-poverty schools. Research, as identified in the literature review, identified this issue more than any other component of teaching in a high-poverty school. Teachers in high-poverty schools often have to defy a plethora of challenges that teachers in other settings may not have to overcome (Educational Testing Services, 1995). The challenges faced in high-poverty schools include combatting hunger (Gehrke, 2005; Jensen, 2009; White et al., 2012), lower attendance rates (2012); social, emotional, and cognitive lags, and health issues (2009); a lack of family support, moving often, and

continual conflict (2009). Addressing the cultural concerns, which are pervasive in the culture of poverty, are paramount to the effectiveness of teachers and to the success of the students.

The second quality identified as necessary for an effective teacher in poverty is the ability to demonstrate *caring*, compassion, and understanding towards students. This attribute is closely linked to the ability to address cultural concerns. When a teacher truly begins to understand the background and experiences of students, an attitude of caring must be exhibited. Caring is instrumental as it shows an attitude of inclusiveness (White et al., 2012) and the ability of the teacher to understand the background of the student and their uniqueness (Bishop, 2011). Haberman (2010) conducted a longitudinal study that identified qualities of effective teachers in high-poverty schools and caring was one of the qualities he identified as essential.

The last major theme identified as an attribute of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school was the role of a teacher, which is inclusive of a disciplinarian, a subject matter expert, the ability to convey content in a way that is understood, reading students, making adjustments in teaching, and setting an example. Discipline is an essential component (Poplin, 2011), which often ties into addressing cultural concerns since high-poverty schools may experience more violence (Gilbert, 1997; Howey, 1999). A longitudinal study conducted in Alabama of over two hundred and nine high-poverty schools, which included sixty high schools, reported that discipline is linked to teacher effectiveness (Morrow, Gilley, Russell, & Strobe, Jr., 1985). Interestingly enough, the same study found that content knowledge mattered little, according to the perceptions of administrators (1985). No other research found equated content knowledge as a factor of

teacher effectiveness in a high-poverty school. Setting an example, another role of the teacher, is essential as research indicates the student-teacher relationship precedes all other relationships (Silcock, 1993; Ladd, 2012) and is instrumental in determining student success (Comer, 2001; Bishop, 2011).

The minor characteristics identified, academically focused and engaging were supported by literature; communication, fearless, and patient were not supported by educational literature. Academically focused included the belief of providing hope with high expectations. An effective teacher in a high-poverty school provides hope and expectations for their students, believing students can succeed (Bishop, 2011; Gherke, 2005; Jensen, 2013). Landsman (2006) states an effective teacher is a “bearer of hope.”

Student engagement as a characteristic, is supported extensively via research, and is the primary method in which students in poverty learn (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Cunningham, 2006/2007; Haberman, 2010; Pogrow, 2009). While research heavily supported engagement as a primary attribute of an effective teacher in poverty, only five of the thirteen administrators perceived it to be a necessary attribute. However, in the definition of an effective teacher, all thirteen administrators equated student engagement to the effectiveness of a teacher.

Research for an effective teacher, not an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, supported the belief that teacher communication of students’ performance (Rice, VonEschenbach, & Noland, 1988) was essential. However, research did not address how a person communicates or the need for a teacher to listen and learn from students, both of which interviewees mentioned. Research did not support the perception of fearlessness or courage being needed as an attribute of an effective teacher. The attribute of patience

was not mentioned in literature; however, when a study was conducted asking eighth grade students what made an effective teacher, *understanding* was a characteristic recognized (Laanemets, Kalamees-Ruubel, & Sepp, 2012). It is evident, through the interviewees and educational research that the characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school are similar, with the exception of communication, being fearless, and exhibiting patience, all of which were minor themes identified by administrators.

Research Question 2. Do the characteristics that administrators perceive as important to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school align with the Alabama teacher evaluation system known as *EDUCATEAlabama*?

Interviews, along with *EDUCATEAlabama*, the state evaluation tool, informed the second research question. The primary themes, from interviews, identified the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school were teacher responsibility and teacher personality. When identifying how the themes aligned with the Principal Observation Form of *EDUCATEAlabama*, forty-five attributes aligned to teacher responsibility and thirteen attributes aligned to teacher personality. It is important to note that multiple attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty aligned with a single subcategory of the Principal Observation Form. For teacher responsibility, the breakdown of the attributes administrators identified as essential to an effective teacher in high-poverty as compared to the 162 subcategories of the Principal Observation Form (POF) were (a) the attribute of *communication* aligned nine times, (b) the attribute of *teacher roles* aligned sixteen times, (c) the attribute of *being academically focused* aligned thirteen times, and (d) the attribute of *addressing cultural concerns* aligned seven times. The theme of teacher personality, as derived from interviews, aligned significantly less with the Principal

Observation Form of *EDUCATEAlabama* and revealed (a) the attribute of *engaging* aligned thirteen times, and (b) the attributes of *caring*, *fearless*, and *patient* did not align at all with the Principal Observation Form.

The characteristics of an effective teacher, identified by administrators in interviews, were then compared to *EDUCATEAlabama*. The comparison was done utilizing a combination of automated and manual coding, to ensure accuracy.

EDUCATEAlabama has five primary categories comprised of 162 characteristics; the five categories addressed in the evaluation tool are (a) Content knowledge, (b) Teaching and Learning, (c) Literacy, (d) Diversity, and (e) Professionalism. These categories of the evaluation tool, when compared to the administrators' perceptions of what characteristics constitute an effective teacher of students of poverty resulted in the following: (a) Content Knowledge – nine of the eighteen subcategories, or 50%, did not align; (b) Teaching and Learning – seventeen of thirty-seven subcategories, or 46%, did not align; (c) Literacy – twenty-seven of thirty-three subcategories, or 82%, did not align; (d) Diversity – twenty-one of the thirty subcategories, or 70%, did not align; and (e) Professionalism – twenty-seven of the forty-four subcategories, or 61.4%, did not align. As mentioned in Chapter 4 and explained above, 119 of 162 subcategories of the detailed observation form and twenty-eight of thirty-nine attributes from the teacher self-assessment did not align with the attributes of an effective teacher in high-poverty. Both evaluation tools demonstrated that over 70% of the attributes for effective teachers in high-poverty, as perceived by administrators, do not align with the expectations provided by the Alabama State Department of Education.

The partial alignment of the perception of administrators with *EDUCATEAlabama* could have a negative impact on evaluations, specifically because the tool does not align with what administrators defined as an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. *EDUCATEAlabama* is an evaluation tool based on (a) professional standards, (b) self-assessment, (c) administrator observations, (d) data provided by the principal, (e) conferences between the administrator and teacher, and (f) an individualized professional learning plan (*EDUCATEAlabama*, 2014; Gadsden City Schools, n.d.). Based on the findings from the study, it is clear the evaluation tool did not measure attributes of teachers; it wholly negated the attributes viewed by administrators as an important aspect of determining an effective teacher. Research supports that evaluations can negatively impact teacher performance in high-poverty schools (Bridwell, 2012). *EDUCATEAlabama*, like many teacher evaluation tools, does not take into account specific or unique circumstances or factors, which may affect teaching and student achievement (Mangiante, 2011; Torff & Sessions, 2009; Wright et al., 1997). Evaluations, particularly in education, should be tailored to meet the individuality of people; it should not be a “one-sized-fits-all” mentality, and it is clear that *EDUCATEAlabama* is not aligned to what administrators in high-poverty schools feel embodies an effective teacher.

Theory

Theory emerged based on the perceptions of administrators and their beliefs about what constitutes an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. The analysis of the thirteen administrator interviews, along with tracking of codes, provided a clear picture of patterns that emerged as themes, supporting the belief that administrators equate certain

qualities with effective teachers in high-poverty schools. Research question 1 delved into the beliefs of each individual administrator and demonstrated a detailed description of the results after coding. Figure 5.1 demonstrates the theory that emerged about what administrators perceive constitutes an effective teacher in a high-poverty school.

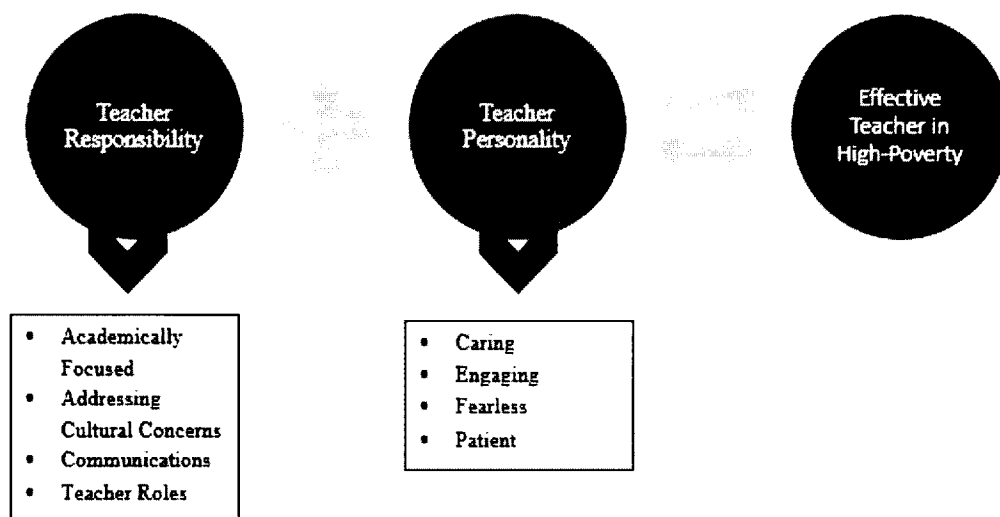


Figure 5.1. Administrators' perception of the attributes that define an effective teacher in a high-poverty school

This theory points to the characteristics that define an effective teacher for students of poverty. The characteristics are not a mere definition of effective teachers; effective teachers determine school success (Silcock, 1993). Research has stated that student success is dependent upon teacher effectiveness, and effective teachers affect the academic and social success of students (Berry, Daughtrey, & Weider, 2009). In fact, teachers are the number one factor that determines student success (Kent, 2004), particularly with students of high-poverty (Donaldson, 2011).

Research Question 2 compared the characteristics that administrators perceived as essential to an effective teacher of students in poverty to the teacher evaluation system in Alabama. The characteristics of effective teachers of high-poverty students did not align

with the teacher evaluation system, *EDUCATEAlabama*. This is particularly disturbing in light of the theory that emerged; if the characteristics of high-poverty students do not align with a teacher evaluation system, then student achievement and teacher employment is at risk. Student achievement influences teacher effectiveness. In addition, since the qualities of an effective teacher do not align with the teacher evaluations system, this disparity could negatively affect the employment of the teacher. Thus, the evaluation does not measure the qualities of an effective teacher, which leads to student success. The juxtaposition between what administrators perceive as the qualities of an effective teacher of high-poverty students, and the role that the teacher evaluation system plays in this process, puts administrators in a precarious situation to base the success of a teacher on a “one size fits all” evaluation.

Limitations

This qualitative research project included thirteen high school administrators situated in high-poverty schools in a southern town in Alabama. The focus of the research was administrators’ perceptions of effective teachers in high-poverty school and the alignment of these characteristics with the *EDUCATEAlabama*, the teacher evaluation system required by Alabama. Although semi-structured interviews, field notes, audio recordings, coding software, and the teacher evaluation system were used to provide triangulation to improve generalizability, there were some limitations:

1. While two major themes, teacher personality and teacher responsibility, were comprised of eight attributes, this is not an inclusive list of attributes. Due to the nature of interviews, administrators had to think quickly, without time to write down or process their answers. In other words, the answers derived

from interviews were typically an expression of their first thoughts and could have been more expansive with time to reflect.

2. This represents a selective group of administrators, with experience primarily in the southern region of the United States, many of whom attended the same university; thus, job experience and exposure were somewhat limited.
3. The data did not take into account the school size; years of experience of the administrator, specifically in high-poverty schools; and the years of experience conducting evaluations.

Recommendations

As identified in the study, the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, as perceived by administrators, warrants a change in the current evaluation tool. In lieu of the results and the discussion in the previous section, three recommendations will follow. First, the Alabama teacher evaluation system should more fully involve administrators in the creation and construction of the evaluation tool to align with the attributes of an effective teacher. Secondly, align *EDUCATEAlabama* with the qualities of an effective teacher in high-poverty schools or the training of administrators must focus on the criteria currently employed in *EDUCATEAlabama*. Finally, provide teacher education programs and professional development courses, custom designed, for high-poverty teachers. Include training that addresses or teaches those characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school identified in this study.

Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations for future research are offered:

1. A study of the effectiveness of a formal teacher-training program, specifically designed to prepare prospective teachers to work in high-poverty school versus the effectiveness of traditional teacher preparation programs.
2. A study of teachers' perception of the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school aligned with the perception of administrators.
3. A study of the former teacher evaluation tool, PEPE, versus the effectiveness of the current evaluation tool, *EDUCATEAlabama*.
4. A study of teacher effectiveness, as gauged by *EDUCATEAlabama*, in a high-poverty school compared to more wealthy schools. This study would provide an understanding of whether *EDUCATEAlabama* is biased towards schools of a specific socioeconomic level.
5. A study of three evaluation tools, utilized in high-poverty areas in the United States, and their effectiveness in measuring attributes of effective teachers in high-poverty schools.
6. A study of how professional development impacts student achievement.
7. The perceptions of what is viewed as an effective teacher in a high-poverty school versus a magnet school.

High-poverty schools are located throughout the United States; their effectiveness is paramount to the success of their students, school, and community. This study revealed there should be a correlation between the administrators' perceptions of an effective teacher and the evaluation tool, specifically since administrators conduct teacher evaluations. States need to integrate evaluation tools, which are individualized to measure teacher effectiveness in all types of schools, including high-poverty schools.

Conclusion

The interviews with administrators provided qualitative data about the perception of administrators concerning the characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school and determined whether these characteristics aligned with the Alabama teacher evaluation tool. The primary attributes of an effective teacher of a high-poverty school, as perceived by administrators were (a) addressing cultural concerns, (b) caring, and (c) teacher roles. The minor attributes of an effective teacher identified were (a) communication, (b) an academically focused teacher, (c) engaging, (d) fearless, and (e) patient. All major attributes are supported by educational research as qualities of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school; whereas, for the minor themes, caring, fearless, and patient are not supported by research. One hundred and nineteen of one hundred and sixty-two subcategories, or 73.5%, of *EDUCATEAlabama* did not align with the perceived qualities of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. This discrepancy between what administrators perceived as the characteristics of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school when compared to the evaluation tool, *EDUCATEAlabama*, left a significant gap in holistically measuring the effectiveness of a teacher. *EDUCATEAlabama* is not an effective evaluation tool for measuring the attributes of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school.

APPENDIX A

CONTACT INFORMATION

The contact information was part of the packet distributed to interviewees.

Contact Information

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Dissertation Topic: *Perception of Administrators: Characteristics of Effective Teachers in High-poverty Schools and the Alignment of these Characteristics with the Teacher Evaluation System*

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Louisiana Tech University Professor, Hubberd H. & Velma
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APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

Informed Consent Form: School Administrator

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study, which will take place from October 15, 2014 to March 30, 2015. This form details the purpose of this study, a description of the involvement required, and your rights as a participant.

- The purpose of this study is to:
 - ✚ To gain insight into the perception that administrators have about the qualities that comprise effective teachers in high-poverty schools.
 - ✚ To analyze if administrator perception of high-quality teachers in high-poverty schools align with the teacher evaluation system.
- The benefits of the research will be:
 - ✚ To better understand the expectations that administrators have of teachers in high-poverty schools.
 - ✚ To identify characteristics of high-quality teachers in high-poverty schools.
- The methods that will be used to meet this purpose include:
 - ✚ One-on-one interviews with school administrators.
- Participation Expectations:
 - ✚ As a school administrator, your participation in this study will consist of one to two interviews lasting approximately one hour. You are not required to answer the questions, and you may elect to not answer any question that makes you uncomfortable.

You are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or the methods I am using. Please contact me at any time at the e-mail address or telephone number listed above.

Interviews will be audio taped to help me capture insights into your own words. Audio

will only be heard by me for the purpose of this study. If you feel uncomfortable with the voice recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time.

You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. In the event you choose to withdraw from the study all information you provide, including audio or visual tapes, will be destroyed and omitted from the final paper.

Insights gathered through interviews will be used for the sole purpose of writing my dissertation. Though observations and direct quotes from you will be used, your name, school, and other identifying information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

By signing this consent form I certify that I, _____ (print your name), agree to the terms of this agreement.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM SUPERINTENDENT

Informed Consent Form Superintendent

Toni Baggiano-Wilson, an Ed.D. candidate from Louisiana Tech University would like to conduct research in [REDACTED] Alabama by interviewing high school administrators in the [REDACTED] Public School System. The study will take place from October 15, 2014 to March 30, 2015. This form details the purpose of this study, a description of the involvement required, and the rights of each participant.

- The purpose of this study is to:
 - ✚ To gain insight into the perception that administrators have about the qualities that comprise effective teachers in high-poverty schools.
 - ✚ To analyze if administrator perception of high-quality teachers in high-poverty schools align with the teacher evaluation system.
- The benefits of the research will be:
 - ✚ To better understand the expectations that administrators have of teachers in high-poverty schools.
 - ✚ To identify characteristics of high-quality teachers in high-poverty schools.
- The methods that will be used to meet this purpose include:
 - ✚ One-on-one interviews with school administrators.
- Participation Expectations:
 - ✚ As a school administrator, his/her participation in this study will consist of one to two interviews lasting approximately one hour. Administrators are not required to answer the questions, and may elect to not answer any question that makes he/she uncomfortable.

Administrators are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or the methods I am using. Please contact me at any time at the e-mail address or telephone number listed above.

Interviews will be audio taped to help capture insights into their words. Audio will only be heard by me for the purpose of this study. If a participant feels uncomfortable with the voice recorder, they may ask that it be turned off at any time.

Participants also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. In the event a participant chooses to withdraw from the study all information he/she provides, including audio or visual tapes, will be destroyed and omitted from the final paper.

Insights gathered through interviews will be used for the sole purpose of writing my dissertation. Though observations and direct quotes will be used, the name, school, and other identifying information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

By signing this consent form I certify that I, _____ (print your name), agree to the terms of this agreement. It is acceptable for Toni Baggiano-Wilson, a doctoral candidate from Louisiana Tech University to conduct interviews with high school principals/administrators, for the purpose of a dissertation only, within the _____ Public School System.

Superintendent Signature

Date

APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

The following questions will provide a guideline for the interview. Interviewees will determine the direction of the interview, and follow-up questions will arise.

Background Questions:

Name

Educational Background

Years of experience in education

Years at this school (teaching and leadership)

Experience as a teacher (experience in a high-poverty school)

Experience as a principal and years as an administrator in high-poverty schools

Positions held

Degrees

Area of specialty or content area

What is your philosophy of education?

Has your philosophy changed over the years or varied from school to school? Why or why not?

What is the socioeconomic make-up of this school? Is that a change over the last five years?

Teacher Effectiveness:

What is your definition of an effective teacher?

What are some qualities or characteristics that you attribute to an effective teacher in a high-poverty school (dependent upon answer, I may want to follow-up with asking them

to name 5 characteristics of teachers in high-poverty schools? Why these specific characteristics?

Do you feel teachers in high-poverty schools must possess unique qualities compared to teachers in more wealthy schools? If so, what are the unique qualities? Why do you feel these are unique to high-poverty schools?

What are your thoughts on how teacher effectiveness is tied to student achievement?

Teacher Evaluation:

How long have you been administering teacher evaluations? How many per year, on average?

How would you describe or define an effective teacher evaluation system?

What type of training did you receive on the EDUCATEAlabama teacher evaluation model? Do you feel you were adequately trained/prepared to evaluate teachers using this evaluation model?

Do you feel educators are an integral part of the creation of the evaluation system? Why or why not?

How often do you generally observe each teacher in a classroom setting (e.g., once a year, once a semester, once a month)?

Do you meet with teachers individually on other occasions? If so, how often and for what purpose?

Do you review and/or discuss student achievement test results with the classroom teacher? Under what circumstances? (For example, do you have such discussions with all teachers each year, or only in circumstances where there are particularly high or low scores?)

How do you handle the dissemination of teacher evaluation results? Meetings? Written communication?

- Do you feel that the attributes of an effective teacher can be measured using the current teacher evaluation system?
- Do you feel the state evaluation tool, EDUCATEAlabama, is adequate in determining which teachers are effective, specifically in high-poverty schools? Why or why not?
- What barriers do you feel exist, if any, with teacher evaluations?

APPENDIX E

SIGNED CONSENT FORM SUPERINTENDENT

Informed Consent Form: Superintendent

By signing this consent form I certify that I, [REDACTED] (print your name), agree to the terms of this agreement. It is acceptable for Toni Baggiano-Wilson, a doctoral candidate from Louisiana Tech University to conduct interviews with high school principals/administrators, for the purpose of a dissertation only, within the Montgomery Public School System.

I also attest with my signature that I have read and understood the following description of the study, "Administrative Perceptions", and its purposes and methods. I understand that my participation in this research is strictly voluntary and my participation or refusal to participate in this study will not affect my relationship with Louisiana Tech University. Further, I understand that I may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any questions without penalty. Upon completion of the study, I understand that the results will be freely available to me upon request. I understand that the results of my survey will be confidential, accessible only to the principal investigators, myself, or a legally appointed representative. I have not been requested to waive nor do I waive any of my rights related to participating in this study.

[REDACTED]
Superintendent Signature

12-16-14
Date

APPENDIX F

IRB APPROVAL AND FORMS



LOUISIANA TECH
UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH

Kimberly Kimbrell

Research & Development

TO: Toni Bagghiano-Wilson and Dr. Kimberly Kimbrell-Lopez
FROM: Dr. Stan Napper, Vice President Research & Development
SUBJECT: HUMAN USE COMMITTEE REVIEW
DATE: October 16, 2014

In order to facilitate your project, an EXPEDITED REVIEW has been done for your proposed study entitled:

"Perception of Administrators: Characteristics of Effective Teachers in High-poverty Schools, and the Alignment of these Characteristics with the Teacher Evaluation System"

HUC 1244

The proposed study's revised procedures were found to provide reasonable and adequate safeguards against possible risks involving human subjects. The information to be collected may be personal in nature or implication. Therefore, diligent care needs to be taken to protect the privacy of the participants and to assure that the data are kept confidential. Informed consent is a critical part of the research process. The subjects must be informed that their participation is voluntary. It is important that consent materials be presented in a language understandable to every participant. If you have participants in your study whose first language is not English, be sure that informed consent materials are adequately explained or translated. Since your reviewed project appears to do no damage to the participants, the Human Use Committee grants approval of the involvement of human subjects as outlined.

Projects should be renewed annually. *This approval was finalized on October 16, 2014 and this project will need to receive a continuation review by the IRB if the project, including data analysis, continues beyond October 16, 2015.* Any discrepancies in procedure or changes that have been made including approved changes should be noted in the review application. Projects involving NIH funds require annual education training to be documented. For more information regarding this, contact the Office of University Research.

You are requested to maintain written records of your procedures, data collected, and subjects involved. These records will need to be available upon request during the conduct of the study and retained by the university for three years after the conclusion of the study. If changes occur in recruiting of subjects, informed consent process or in your research protocol, or if unanticipated problems should arise it is the Researchers responsibility to notify the Office of Research or IRB in writing. The project should be discontinued until modifications can be reviewed and approved.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Mary Livingston at 257-2292 or 257-5066.

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH

PO BOX 1000 • UNIVERSITY PARK • 77130-1000 • TEXAS • 257-2292

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